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THE

HISTORY

OF THE

CHURCH OF CHRIST.

VOLUME THE FOURTH, PART I.

CONTAINING

THE REMAINDER OF THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY;

ALSO

THE FOURTEENTH, FIFTEENTH, AND PART OF THE SIXTEENTH, CENTURIES.

EDITED FROM THE MANUSCRIPTS

OF THE LATE REV. JOSEPH MILNER,

WITH ADDITIONS, CORRECTIONS, &c.

BY THE REV. ISAAC MILNER, D. D.

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PREFACE.

THE publication of the fourth volume of the History of the Church of Christ has been delayed so long, and so much beyond the period at which the editor had hoped the manuscripts might have been reviewed and printed, that he now feels himself called upon to state briefly the reasons, which have retarded the execution of this work.

1. The principal reason, no doubt, is the decease of the learned and industrious author; which melancholy event took place soon after the third volume was completed. While he was alive, no time was lost, no pains were spared, in forwarding an ecclesiastical history, in which the writer conceived the honour of God and the benefit of mankind were materially concerned. But the progress of an undertaking, which was deprived of its main operative spring, unavoidably became slow and difficult. Add to this, what the editor has already mentioned in his preface to the second edition of the first volume; how extremely difficult it now is to prepare and fit for the press such of the manuscripts as were intended to make a fourth volume. While recourse could be had to the author, many doubts and obscurities might be cleared up in a few minutes, which, in the present circumstances, cost the editor hours and days; and, frequently, he is at last compelled to desist from further investigation without success, from want of knowing the meaning of some character of shorthand, or the proper edition to be made use of in consulting the authorities.

2. The little leisure, which the editor could spare from indispensable duties, was employed, for a con-

siderable time in correcting and REPRINTING the FIRST volume of this work. The booksellers pressed so earnestly for a second edition of that volume, that the editor, in having complied with their requests, trusts he has gratified the wishes of the public.

3. It was understood, likewise, that the public were very desirous of seeing some of the rev. Mr. Milner's sermons in print. An able and judicious friend, with great diligence and kindness, selected and revised a proper number of the manuscripts, and superintended the publication of them at York; but the affecting task of writing the life of their author devolved upon the editor of this history. Moreover, a second edition of the sermons was soon called for. This and the life of the author, with large additions to both, were also reprinted by the editor at Cambridge and published in 1801. The time and care required for these several purposes necessarily diverted his attention from the ecclesiastical history.

4. Further: As the editor proceeded in reviewing the materials designed for the fourth volume, he found them more imperfect in many ways, than he had at first expected. They were composed with several interruptions, caused by the author's increasing weakness and infirmities; and there is reason to believe, that a considerable portion of them was not even once read over by himself. It has been the object of the editor to supply defects of every kind in the best manner he was able.

5. During the greater part of the year 1802, he entertained hopes that it might be in his power to complete the fourth volume by the midsummer of the present year at the furthest. And for this purpose, almost every moment, in which he had any option of employment, has been most scrupulously appropriated to the forwarding of this work. But it so happened, that in the late spring, he was many weeks incapacitated for business by a disorder, which is well known to have been prevalent and severe in the southern parts of this island. This cause alone has rendered it

impossible for him, by any exertions, to be ready with all the materials of this volume at the time above mentioned: but besides this, it now appears that the contents of it will so much exceed what was foreseen that they cannot be conveniently bound together in a single octavo; particularly as many readers of this history have signified their desire that the fourth volume might contain a full and complete index to the whole work. The increase of its size, distinct from the addition which it will receive from the index, arises, partly from a more than ordinary closeness in the writing of the author's manuscripts; and partly, from a great number of insertions by the editor; who feels assured that most of them would have been made by the author himself, if he had lived to revise the work, and review the authorities to which he has actually appealed by numerous references.

These circumstances, it is hoped, may furnish a reasonable apology for the delay of this portion of the History of the Church of Christ.

It has been judged proper to divide the fourth volume into two parts; and as soon as that point was determined, it became a question, whether the patience of the public should not be tried a little longer, by deferring the publication of the first part till the second was finished. Such an arrangement, in which a most important and interesting portion of ecclesiastical history would have been placed at once before the reader, without any suspension or interruption of the narrative, it was clearly seen, would have been favourable to the reputation of the work; but, the consideration of the great indulgence already granted by the public, their frequent calls through the medium of the booksellers, and lastly the opportunity, which the separate publication of this first part of the volume affords the editor, of explaining the real causes of the delay; these reasons have induced him to gratify the readers of this history with a first part of vol. iv. before the whole could be finished.

The second part of the volume will still require

much labour and perseverance: but, should the editor live, he engages with the public to bestow his leisure hours upon that till it be printed. He dares not presume to say the same respecting a fifth volume. Experience has taught him to be extremely reserved in making promises, the performance of which depends upon the continuance of a certain degree of health, and therefore, though he certainly indulges some hopes even of completing the History of the Church of Christ, he must not entangle himself by giving inconsiderate assurances. He freely admits, however, that any vacant moments he may have, could scarce be more usefully employed than in carrying forward and finishing the plan of his near relative, and he is sure that no other object of study and application can be nearer his heart.

The editor has no doubt but the subject matter of the fourth volume will afford abundant satisfaction to the christian reader. Almost every page of the FIRST PART of it, which is now laid before the public, is replete both with instruction and entertainment; and what certainly distinguishes this history throughout, a very large portion of it, that portion, which peculiarly entitles it to the name of the History of the Church of Christ, is of such a nature as not to have found its way into our ordinary ecclesiastical histories. The learned reader, when he has perused this book, can scarcely fail to exclaim, How little notice, in general, has been taken of the genuine religious principles and practice of the bishops Grosseteste and Bradwardine! How are the very best parts of the character of Wickliff almost consigned to oblivion! What defective and erroneous notions of John Huss, and Jerom of Prague, are inculcated by authors who have attempted to abstract and condense the proceedings of the council of Constance; and lastly, how little acquainted are even many studious and wellinformed persons with the religious part of the character of Martin Luther!

Perhaps few men have been more exposed than this celebrated German to the extremes of calumny and panegyric. Ecclesiastical histories are full, not only of discordant sentiments relative to his proceedings, but also of contradictory statements of the facts. His bold and enterprising genius, his firm and intrepid temper, and above all, his persevering spirit of inquiry, continue to be the admiration of every true protestant; while those of the papal persuasion have endeavoured to load his memory with charges, which at first originated in chagrin and hatred, and have been kept alive by bigotry and superstition. The infidel writers, who usually affect extraordinary moderation in every thing but religious concerns, have rashly followed the papists in questioning the purity of the reformer's motives. Nobody is surprised at this; but it may well seem a wonderful, as it is truly an affecting circumstance, that, in our enlightened times, many should be found, who though they have not only never renounced christianity, but even profess themselves sincere friends of the reformation, yet appear to understand very little of the real dispositions of Luther. Some of his natural qualities have been the subject of much observation, but the ruling principles of the man, those principles which were eminently spiritual and christian, are almost buried in silence.

There would be little room left for controversy respecting this extraordinary personage, if men would turn their attention to the investigation of his private conduct and secret motives, and would accustom themselves to estimate characters by scriptural rules. Happily, the authentic documents for this purpose, though by no means so plentiful, in some of the earlier years of his life, as might be wished, are yet, in the main, sufficiently clear and numerous. They establish, beyond dispute, the singular purity and disinterested integrity of Luther; and one may venture to affirm, that if the refined, philosophical taste of our historians, as well as of the age in which they live,

would have allowed them to produce and digest the unexceptionable evidence which actually exists, much juster notions, concerning the Saxon reformer and his proceedings would have been entertained by students of history than they can now possibly deduce from reading several of our best writers. The defects of their performances have not arisen from the want of ability, or of industry, or of learning. Such an insinuation would argue the highest degree of presumption in the editor. It is his sincere belief that several historical productions of modern times might challenge, almost in any point of comparison, the most celebrated pieces of antiquity. It is to the neglect of observing, investigating, and illustrating the operations of the genuine principles of the GOSPEL, that the deficiencies here spoken of are perhaps intirely to be ascribed. The editor deprecates the charge of censorious criticism, and submits to the judgment of impartial and intelligent readers for a candid construction of his meaning, while, with much grief, he suggests to their consideration, Whether some of our ablest historians have not discovered much more anxiety to enumerate the various political and subordinate causes of the reformation, than to trace diligently, and mark distinctly, the powerful energy of the essential doctrines of christianity, as, through the gracious assistance of the holy Spirit of God, they efficaciously influenced the conduct of the first reformers? Should this question be answered in the affirmative, it may then be worth while to inquire further, Whether this UNPHILOSOPHICAL, as well as unchristian neglect of the operation of gospel principles on the minds of men who have been distinguished as the chief instruments of providence in bringing about important ecclesiastical revolutions, does not arise from an acquiescence at least in the irreligious taste of the times, if not from the actual contagion of modern scepticism and infidelity. For, in seasons of great departure from sound doctrine, when men are apt to be ashamed of the "Son of man and his words,"

it requires much courage and piety to be an open and faithful defender of the truth. Also, when the gospel itself is perpetually assailed under the specious pretence of modest doubt and inquiry, the very best disposed persons have need to be constantly watchful, lest their own minds should imperceptibly be infected with the hostile insinuations of artful enemies of revelation. It should seem that no writers are in this respect more dangerous than those learned and able historians of a philosophical stamp, with whom FAME is avowedly the motive and the reward of their labours.*

But it will be said, that the niceties of controversial divinity, are not the proper province either of the polite or of the profound historian. Be it so: Yet surely it must be granted, that the investigation of men's GENERAL principles of conduct, must be of singular service towards discovering their real motives in particular transactions. If, for example, in the case of Martin Luther, it be an undoubted fact, that during all the important scenes in which he was so providentially called to be a principal actor, the peculiar truths of the gospel were powerfully, and practically influential on his mind, then it will follow, that the MOTIVES of that great reformer cannot be explained or comprehended without specially adverting to those truths, and diligently weighing their effects in the production of human actions, according to the direction of the holy scriptures, "By their fruits ye shall know them." A due attention to these things surely ought not to be confounded with an improper or an objectionable regard to theological niceties.

Indeed if the writers of ecclesiastical histories have not themselves also some practical, experimental knowledge of the nature of pure christianity, as well as theoretical and speculative notions concerning it, they must forever be embarrassed in contemplating the conduct of good men; and the more they aspire to what is called the philosophy of history, that is, the

* Fame is the motive, it is the reward of our labour; GIBBON. Miscell. vol. ii.

more they affect to develop general principles, to form abstract systems, and to unfold the secret motives of men's hearts, the worse guides will they become to their unbiassed, unsuspecting readers, and the more likely to mislead and prejudice their minds.

The histories of Luther and of lutheranism are so intimately mixed with secular politics, and so pregnant with revolutions of the greatest consequence to kingdoms and empires, that however little disposed the modern historians may have been to trace the existence of the true church of Christ, or record the effects of the operation of pure christian principles, they have found it impossible not to give considerable attention to the transactions of the Saxon reformer and his associates. In fact, the civil and religious liberties of mankind have been found to be closely connected together in practice; and it is this circumstance, which, in a great measure, has contributed to the celebrity of Luther and other German theologians.

No person could have a greater esteem for Luther than the author of this history. The present volume will show how well versed he was in his writings, and with how much care he had studied his character. He loved him as a man of plain dealing and unfeigned piety: he admired him as a champion of truth: he revered him as an instrument of God, highly honoured, and expressly chosen for the purpose of defending and propagating the christian faith; and he contemplated his success with delight and astonishment. But the more thoroughly he had penetrated the secret thoughts of the reformer, the more deeply was our author's spirit affected on account of the MANNER in which he saw the righteous views and motives of this excellent man were transmitted to posterity by the ablest modern historians. That manner, to say the best of it, he considered as extremely imperfect in general, and frequently dangerous and illusory. Most of these writers appeared to him to employ their chief strength concerning SECONDARY causes, and some of them evidently with an evil design against chris-

tianity: whereas the devout mind of the author of this history of the church of Christ, saw the FINGER OF GOD in every step of the reformation. With his favourite Luther, he altogether agreed, that the real distemper of the church, in the beginning of the sixteenth century, was CORRUPTION OF EVANGELICAL DOCTRINE. It was but gradually that the Saxon reformer saw this melancholy truth; but when his eyes were once fairly opened to the nature of the evil, he never more lost sight of it; and he exerted every nerve in administering the specific medicine. It grieved Mr. Milner, not a little, to see how this very important matter is almost intirely overlooked by historians. He considered the thing not merely as an injury done to the memory of an eminent servant of God, but as an infallible symptom of the decay, at least among the learned, of religious knowledge and religious taste.

Unbelievers and sceptics do their utmost in every way to exclude God and his Christ from being supposed to exercise any superintending influence over those great events which prove favourable to the propagation and establishment of pure religion; and when for private reasons, they do not choose to speak plainly, they usually shelter themselves under equivocal and ironical expressions; and try to wound the gospel of Jesus by depreciating his most distinguished servants. Thus pride, opposition, singularity, selfinterest, ambition, enthusiasm, have been insinuated to the unsuspecting minds of many readers, as the ruling motives of the Saxon reformer.

The writer, in the management of this part of his history of the church, has endeavoured to rescue the memory of Luther from UNJUST aspersions of every kind; and he does this, not by INDECISIVE effusions of praise and censure, or of affected candor and concession, but by a scriptural display of the nature of the new creature in Christ Jesus, as exemplified in the conduct of this eminent theologian. The former method might have insured to him the commendation of modern critics, but the latter only could be

admitted into a history which has for its single object the celebration of the honour of the divine government, as made manifest in the conversion of sinners and the extension of the kingdom of Christ.

The reader will however observe, that his historian is not blind either to the excellencies or to the faults of Luther, considered as a natural* man. But he must keep in mind, that the writer's CHIEF business with the reformer consisted in exhibiting the operation of his genuine christian principles. The German theologian, in the author's views, was a distinguished subject of almighty grace, which, by enlightening his understanding, changing his affections, and animating his hopes, prepared him in a most wonderful manner, for the extraordinary part he was appointed to sustain. When the intelligent reader shall have perused this portion of the sixteenth century, he will be a better judge of the author's penetration and of the soundness and impartiality of his conclusions.

Mr. Milner, in his introduction to the first volume of this history, complains of the ecclesiastical historians, "that they had developed, with a studious particularity, the intricacies and intrigues of popery; that the connexion between the church and state had afforded very ample materials of what is commonly called church history; but that learning and philosophy had been much more respected than godliness and virtue." A treatment of this sort was to be expected from deistical historians; but that the same lamentable truth should be exemplified in the writings of those who believe christianity, and are bound to support its cause, is discouraging and vexatious in the highest degree. The fact, however, is not to be denied: it is not to be denied, for example, that Luther's practical interpretation of the scriptural doctrines of the salvation of mankind, as well as his arguments against the reigning corruptions of the same doctrines, scarcely appear at all in modern descriptions

* 1 Cor. ii. 14.

of the reformation of the church. The editor is at a loss to assign any other causes for the omission than those already mentioned in this preface; namely, the contagion of the times, and the actual decay of a religious taste. Men learn not only to undervalue, but absolutely to overlook the very existence and operation of the most precious evangelical principles.

A short quotation from an elegant, and in general, a very accurate historian, will serve to illustrate the preceding reflections. He informs us, that "there was scarce any opinion or practice of the Romish church, which Luther endeavoured to reform, but what had been previously animadverted upon by Erasmus, and had afforded him subject either of censure or raillery."*

To this assertion of the incomparable historian, it would not be difficult to produce very considerable exceptions, were we disposed to examine separately those opinions and practices of the papal system which the rulers of that establishment considered as essential to the maintenance of the existing domination; but it is by no means the design of the editor, in quoting this passage, to cavil at a general assertion, which in substance has often been made before, and which is true in the main, when taken in the sense the writer intended it to be understood. Dr. Robertson had his eye chiefly on the scandalous vices of the monks; the intrigues, avarice, and encroachments of the dignified clergy, and many abominable impieties and superstitions of the Romish church. And these, most certainly, had often afforded to Erasmus matter for satirical animadversion or sarcastical stricture, before they became the object of Luther's grief, indignation, and remonstrance. So far, therefore, the sentiment of the quotation is supported by fact. But neither before, nor after the commencement of Luther's attack on the Roman catholic opinions and practices, did Erasmus ever concur with him in the grand article of con-

* Robertson's Charles V. b. ii. p. 118.

tention. It may be admitted that he skirmished as it were, and with great success, against many of the auxiliaries of popery; but never once in his life did he look in the face, what, according to Luther's judgment, was the real efficient enemy of Christ and his religion; never did he lay siege to the STRONGHOLDS of SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS. To pull down THESE with all his might, was both the object and the practice of the Saxon reformer. Erasmus said many excellent things, in an elegant way, concerning Christ and the gospel, concerning piety, purity of life, christian charity, meekness, and peaceable tempers. He exposed, with great ability and with exquisite humour, and it may truly be added, with much advantage to the reformation, the ambition, covetousness, and luxurious excesses of the clergy. Luther, who cordially agreed with him in all these just animadversions, went to the ROOT both of the evil and of the good. The depraved nature of man he taught as the root of the evil; contrition and humility, with a lively faith in the Redeemer, as the only cure of the reigning evil, and the only source of FUTURE GOOD. While the former courted popes and cardinals, and temporized with them, FANCYING that reformation of ecclesiastical abuses might be brought about by mild and prudential MANAGEMENT, the latter refused to make ANY SINFUL COMPROMISES, boldly opposed all antichristian notions of the MERIT OF WORKS, defended the important doctrine of justification by faith, and committed his cause to God. The doctrine of justification by faith was the article which, of all others, this great man had most at heart. If that were preserved, he conceived nothing could go materially wrong; if that were lost, nothing would go right; and in no great length of time he was convinced, that this fundamental doctrine could be established ONLY on the RUINS of popery.

The opinions of Erasmus and Luther on this subject were substantially different, and in some important views the reverse of each other. Erasmus, however, was so dexterous and wary a disputant, that it is

no easy matter to say precisely what his sentiments were on this leading article of faith: and to enlarge further in this place, either on the comparative excellencies or defects of these two great men, so celebrated in ecclesiastical history, would be to anticipate a considerable portion of the contents of the fourth volume. These brief observations may be sufficient to show how inconsiderately our very best writers have sometimes expressed themselves concerning religious matters. Whether Martin Luther was or was not sound and rational in his expositions of the leading doctrines of christianity, makes no part of the present question. The existing records demonstrate two things; first, the real nature of his theological creed; and secondly, that his religious sentiments in essential points, constituted the mainspring both of his private and his public conduct: and therefore the omission of so important a part of ecclesiastical information, especially by a learned and philosophical historian, from whatever cause it may have proceeded, is not to be defended.

The quotation above mentioned, from Dr. Robertson, is but a single specimen of that sort of defective and erroneous representation of religious characters, which is to be found in numerous pages of modern histories, in other respects of deservedly great reputation. However, as it was the plan of the author of this history of the church to illustrate the nature and efficacy of christian principles, throughout different ages, by the conduct of good men, those eminent servants of God, whose memories have most materially suffered from the treatment here alluded to, are regarded by him as having a strict claim to peculiar attention.

The editor, in concluding, cannot but sincerely lament that the author of this history had no opportunity of rendering his own performance more perfect, by revising the manuscripts himself in a more finished state, exercising his judgment again upon the arrangement of the materials, and applying his last corrections

to the composition. In that case, this volume might have been presented to the public with greater confidence; and the editor would most certainly have been freed, in various instances, from much trouble, doubt, and uncertainty. In supplying deficiencies, he has constantly endeavoured to adhere as closely as possible to the general plan of the deceased historian; and he requests the candid reader, if he should be disposed to censure the fourth volume as inferior in execution to the three former, to recollect that the deprivation of the finishing hand of the author is an irreparable loss.

The editor had once designed to distinguish the original manuscripts from every addition that has been made to them; and this, no doubt, would have been the most effectual way to secure the reputation of their author. But he found it almost impossible to proceed upon that system: In many instances, the sentences of Mr. Milner were left so abrupt and unfinished; and the references to the authorities so general, ambiguous, and indecisive, that he has often been compelled to mix, according to the best of his judgment, both his own matter and expression with the original materials of the historian.

In these memoirs uncommon pains are taken with the affairs of Luther, especially during the first years of the wonderful exertions of this great reformer. To furnish the reader with solid and luminous information, concerning the interesting transactions of that memorable period; and at the same time to compress the narrative into a moderate compass, was no easy task. Those, who are best acquainted with the original documents of the times will be the most competent judges of the execution of this part of the work.

Such as it is, the author, in composing it, certainly believed himself to be employed in the service of his heavenly Master: and in the humble hope of HIS blessing and protection, it is now committed to the judgment of candid and impartial readers.

The second part of the volume will be crowded, still more than the first, with surprising and important matter. Great events rapidly succeed one another during all the former part of the sixteenth century; and great actors appear on the stage. Erasmus lived till the year 1536; and it pleased a kind providence to continue the inestimable lives of Luther and Melancthon some years longer; and also to raise up many other worthies, who should contend for christian truth and christian liberty with wisdom and courage. On the contrary, the powers of darkness summoned all their forces in determined opposition. Our historian studiously exerts himself to mark the growth of infant protestantism. It was his opinion " that no scenes, since the apostles' days, were more instructive."

N. B. To many readers no part of the book will, probably, be more interesting than the matters contained in the appendix. Several things are placed there, which, it was thought, might too much interrupt the thread of the narrative; and some additions are made by the editor from sources which the author had no opportunity of examining. It will, however, be very easy for any one, as he goes through the several chapters of the history, always to peruse, if he chooses, the corresponding part of the appendix.

CENTURY XIII.

(CONTINUED.)

CHAP. V.

The General State of the Church in this Century.

IT was judged proper, in the preceding volume, to give one unbroken narrative of waldensian transactions in ecclesiastical matters, till the time of the reformation.

That narrative is contained in the four last chapters of the volume; and though it does not belong to the thirteenth century exclusively, it is, however, as was before observed, ascribed to it, because in the course of the thirteenth century, most extraordinary persecutions and conflicts took place among the waldenses, and particularly excited the attention of Europe. Our immediate business must now be the continuation of that century.

From the animosity of the waldensian persecutions, and from the unanimity, with which the powers of the earth, both secular and ecclesiastical, supported these persecutions, the reader is prepared already to conclude, that, abstracted from the churches of the valleys and their connexions, there was scarcely in Europe, at that time, a visible church of Christ to be found. But there were, as the waldenses confessed, some "individual souls in Babylon," who loved the Lord, and served him with their spirit under all these disadvantages. I shall reserve to the two next chapters the distinct account of these individuals.

In this chapter I propose to give a view of the general state of christendom, which, though it be an indirect method of illustrating the circumstances of

the real church of Christ, is yet the only one which the depravity of the times can afford us.

The gloom of ignorance was immensely great, nor was it abated, but, in some respects, rather increased, by the growing celebrity of the aristotelian philosophy. For by it the understandings of men were furnished with polemical weapons, but by no means enlightened with useful truths. Endless questions were started; and as every disputant, by the very nature of the learning then in vogue, was much more engaged in confounding his adversary, than in explaining any one object of science, hence, every serious inquirer after truth must have been embarrassed beyond measure. The controversial combatants, while they raised and agitated the dust of contentions, suffocated each other, and gave no real light either to themselves, or to the world in general. The unlettered part of mankind admired their "seraphic"* skill and ingenuity, little suspecting that these disputatious doctors were not, in their knowledge, many degrees removed above the most ignorant and vulgar. Some few there were of superior genius and penetration, who saw through the sophistry of the fashionable learning, and cultivated a more reasonable mode of intellectual improvement.

Roger Bacon, the franciscan friar, stands distinguished among these. His knowledge of astronomy, optics, and mathematics, as well as of Greek and oriental learning, was wonderful for those times. But he and a very few others shone in vain, except to themselves, in the firmament of knowledge. All feared, scarce any aided, and very few understood them. Bacon himself, the glory of the British nation, was many years confined in a loathsome prison, and was strongly suspected of dealing in magic. I know no evidence of his piety and love of evangelical truth; and therefore it is not pertinent to the design of this history to enlarge on his character. But a few words

* Bonaventura was called the seraphic doctor; Francis the seraphic father.

expressive of his contempt of the learning of his contemporaries deserve to be quoted.* "Never," says he, "was there so great an appearance of wisdom, nor so much exercise of study, in so many faculties and in so many countries, as within these last forty years. For doctors are every where dispersed, in every city and borough, especially by the two studious orders, when at the same time there never was so great ignorance. The herd of students fatigue themselves, and play the fool about the miserable translations of Aristotle, and lose their time, their labour, and their expense. Appearances alone engage them; and they have no care to acquire real knowledge, but only to seem knowing in the eyes of the senseless multitude."

Bacon, by the two studious orders, means the dominicans and franciscans, who were almost the only orders, which devoted themselves to study. These men had AMPLE buildings and princely houses.† They attended the deathbeds of the rich and great, and urged them to bequeath immense legacies to their own orders. The subtile jargon of the schools infected their whole semblance of learning. However, as they appeared more knowing, and were certainly more studious than the other orders, they gained much ground in this century; and indeed, till the time of the institution of the jesuits, they were the pillars of the papacy. Persecution of heretics, so called, formed a great part of their employment. The dominicans‡ in particular were the founders of the inquisition. These last came into England about the year 1221, and first appeared at Oxford. The franciscans were first settled at Canterbury in 1234. They both cultivated the aristotelian philosophy, and being the confidential agents of the pope, they, under various pretences, exacted large sums of money through the kingdom, and fleeced

* Mosheim.

† History of the Abbey of St. Albans, by Newcome.

‡ These were also called jacobins, from their settlement in St. James's street in Paris.

even the abbots of the monasteries. The bishops and secular clergy saw themselves excluded by these means from the confidence of the laity. For, in auricular confessions, and other superstitions of the times, the friars had, by the pope's authority, very much arrogated to themselves the power, which had formerly been possessed by the clergy.*

The franciscans particularly undermined the influence of the secular ecclesiastics by popular practices: they preached both in towns and in the country: they pretended to no property: they lived on contributions of their audiences, and walked barefoot and in mean habits. On Sundays and holidays crowds were collected to hear them; and they were received as confessors in preference to the bishops and clergy: and thus, when the credit of the other monastic orders was well nigh exhausted, and the secular clergy, through immoralities had been reduced to contempt, two new orders, having the semblance of worth, not the substance, revived the authority of the Romish church, supported the papacy, strengthened every reigning superstition, and, by deeplaid plans of hypocrisy, induced numbers to enrich both the papacy and the monastic foundations.

A remarkable instance of papal tyranny, exercised through their means in this century, will show the abject slavery and superstition under which this island groaned. In 1247, Innocent IV. gave a commission to John the franciscan, as follows: "We charge you, that, if the major part of the English prelates should make answer, that they are exempt from foreign jurisdiction, you demand a greater sum, and compel them, by ecclesiastical censures, to withdraw their appeals, any privilege or indulgence notwithstanding."

This was the famous "non obstante clause," by which the pope, in the plenitude of his dominion, assumed to himself the same dispensing power in the church, which king James II. did long after in the

* Hist. Abbey of St. Albans.

state. But the punishment of the former for his temerity and arrogance followed not so soon as in the case of the latter. For God had put into the hearts of princes and statesmen to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God should be fulfilled.* And thus the wickedness of men in neglecting his gospel was justly punished.

So shameless were the popes at this time in their exactions, and so secure was their hold on the abject superstition of mankind, that they grossly defrauded even the franciscans themselves, and were not afraid of the consequences. Men, who received not the testimony of Jesus Christ, and refused submission to his easy yoke, were induced to kiss the iron rod of an Italian tyrant.

Two observations of Matthew Paris, taken from different parts of his history, and compared together, seem to me to illustrate in a good degree the nature of the subjection in which the spirits of men were held in those times. Speaking of the innumerable oppressions and corruptions of the popedom, which particularly prevailed during the long reign of Henry III. the pusillanimous successor of king John, he breaks out into an animated apostrophe to the pope. "Holy father, why do you permit such disorders? You deserve the hardships you undergo: you deserve to wander like Cain through the earth. I would know what preferment an Englishman ever obtains in Italy? What just reason can possibly be assigned, why foreigners should prey on the revenues of our church? Our sins have brought these calamities upon us."† The historian alludes to the residence of Innocent IV. at Lyons, where he was obliged to hide himself from the factions, which had expelled him from Italy at that time. I observe also, that this is that same pope, who gave the imperious commission to John the franciscan mentioned above, which commission also was dated from Lyons. If the reader lay all these circumstances together, the unex-

* Rev. xvii. 17. † Collier's Ecc. vol. i.

ampled tyranny of the papal measures, the shameless violation of every principle of equity and decorum in the conduct of the Italian legates and agents, the strong indignation expressed against these things by such learned men as Matthew Paris, and even the open opposition made to the pope in those times, he may be disposed to wonder why the Roman hierarchy was not destroyed by a combination of princes and states. If this be a difficulty, the consideration of another passage of Matthew Paris will sufficiently explain it. Though he himself has given us the plainest accounts of the enormities of king John, who was beyond question, in every light, one of the worst of princes, and one of the worst of men, yet he observes, "We ought to hope, and most assuredly to trust, that some good works, which he did in this life, will plead for him before the tribunal of Jesus Christ. For he built one abbey, and dying bequeathed a sum of money to another." So grossly ignorant was this ingenious and valuable historian of the all-important article of justification by the merit of Jesus Christ alone through faith! It was the revival of this article, which subverted the foundation of the Roman religion at the time of the reformation. For while men allow themselves to doubt of the sufficiency of Christ as a saviour, so long as the conscience is harassed with doubts or perplexities, it will naturally betake itself to any superstitions which happen to prevail, in order to pacify the mind. And the popedom held out, by monastic institutions, and a variety of other means, such a quantity of false reliefs to a guilty conscience, that even the shameless king John might seem to merit the kingdom of heaven by certain good works. M. Paris himself was entangled in the same nets of pharisaical religion. So were the greater part of mankind throughout Europe at that time. We have seen, however, that the waldenses could find peace and relief of conscience, and the expectation of heaven through Jesus Christ alone by faith; and hence were enabled to despise the whole popedom with all its append-

ages; while others, who trembled in conscience for their sins, and knew not the holy wisdom of resting on Christ alone for salvation, might swell with indignation at the wickedness of the court of Rome, but durst not emancipate themselves from its bonds. It has been said by those who are willing to palliate the Roman abominations, that such a power as that of the pope was necessary at that time to tame the ferocious spirits of men; and that the power of the pope preserved some order in society. It may be allowed that it was a cement, but it was a cement of iniquity. Men were held by it in the cords of superstition, and were even encouraged to live in wickedness, by false hopes of heaven. Such hopes did not sanctify, but corrupt their minds: whereas the faith of Christ at once gives peace to the conscience, and leads it to true holiness.

To do justice to the real protestant character, which began with Claudius of Turin, and at length produced the reformation, it ought to be known, that the idolatry, the encouragement of sin, and the selfrighteous superstitions subversive of the real merit of Christ, and the grace of the gospel, were no less flagrant in the popedom than they have been represented, and were understood to be by our fathers. Therefore, against some modern attempts to give a specious colour to the Roman abominations, it may be proper, in addition to what has already been stated, to give two authentic facts, which will not need much comment.

In the year 1234, pope Gregory IX. willing to revive the cause of the eastern crusades, which, through a series of disastrous events was now much on the decline; and feeling the connexion between this cause and the credit of the popedom, by a bull directed to all christendom, invited men to assume the cross, and proceed to the holy land. "Notwithstanding, says he, the ingratitude of christians, the goodness of God is not withdrawn from them. His* providence is still actively engaged to promote the happiness of man-

* Collier's Eccl. vol. i.

kind: his remedies suit their temper, his prescriptions are proportioned to the disease. The service to which they are now invited is an EFFECTUAL ATONEMENT for the miscarriages of a negligent life: the discipline of a regular penance would have discouraged many offenders so much, that they would have had no heart to venture upon it: but the HOLY WAR is a compendious method of discharging men from guilt, and restoring them to the divine favour. Even if they die on their march, the intention will be taken for the deed, and many in this way may be crowned without fighting."

As I have ventured to contradict some positions of Mosheim and other protestant writers, who seemed to me to date the gross corruptions of popedom too early, so the same regard for veracity, which is the capital quality of a real historian, requires me to bear witness to the strict truth of their representations of Romish evils, in the times in which they really did prevail. In opposition, therefore, to the glosses of those, who seem to maintain, that papal indulgences had no connexion with men's eternal state, but related only to their ecclesiastical privileges in this life, let it be submitted to the reader, whether every person who reads the bull of Gregory IX. must not have understood, that he pretended in the name of God to absolve crusaders from real guilt, and to insure to them the kingdom of heaven itself: whether he did not in effect oppose the doctrine of the atonement of Christ, and teach men to ground their justification from God, in contempt of that atonement, on the merit of the performance of the military service which he enjoined. It is easy to multiply futile distinctions; but to what purpose are they introduced at all, when the obvious practical sense of the bull could only be that, which I have mentioned, when it was so understood, and when it induced men to act with such hopes and views as have been stated?

Indeed while severe penances had been in repute, and men were in the habit of submitting to undergo

them, the atonement of Christ had long been rendered in effect insignificant; and selfrighteous prospects of the divine favour had been encouraged throughout the christian world. But the evil was now multiplied exceedingly. The additional doctrine of commutation for penances, while it removed the mind still farther from the faith of Christ, and fixed its dependence more strongly on the popedom, opened the floodgates of wickedness and vice, taught men to gratify every disposition of corrupt nature, and to believe such gratifications consistent with a prospect of gaining the divine favour, even while they remained as impure in heart and life as ever. It is then to no purpose for men to declaim with M. Paris against the corruptions of this or that pope, while with him they maintain the selfrighteous principle of popery itself. Evils of the worst kind must prevail, while we think ourselves capable of making atonement for our sins by any kind of works whatever. Let us learn the true humility and the genuine faith of the gospel, which works by the love of God and man; and then the practical evils will vanish for want of a foundation. Protestants will always have a strong temptation to embrace some selfrighteous notions, as those of popery or socinianism, or perhaps they may ultimately have recourse to atheism itself, when they neglect the real peculiarity of christianity. These considerations merit a very serious attention: they evince the importance of the reformation itself, and illustrate the nature of its fundamental principles.

The other fact, which demonstrates the genuine character of the religion which predominated in Europe, I have extracted from a work lately published.* John Maryns was abbot of St. Albans about the end of the thirteenth century, whose dying words are recorded to have been to this effect. "O, holy Alban, whom I have loved and addressed as my best aid! as I have existed and lived by thy help, so, O glorious

* Hist. of the Abbey of St. Albans, by Newcome, p. 203.

saint! defend me from the pains of hell." Who this same Alban was, or whether he ever existed at all, are questions not easily answered, nor is it material to our purpose to inquire whether he was a real or a fictitious saint; but it is evident that John Maryns, by a solemn act of worship, placed the same confidence in him, which Stephen did in Jesus Christ when he committed his departing spirit into his hands. The distinctions, it seems, insisted on by the papists, between the higher and inferior kinds of worship, are futile evasions. Serious worshippers of their communion practically opposed the fundamental maxim of christianity, "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and man."* The devotions of Maryns were perfectly analogous to those then in fashion. The idolatry of the romish communion is evident; and when the reader recollects what has been said of the doctrines of the waldenses, he will see how far their representations of antichrist are founded in fact.

That the ecclesiastical powers in these miserable times were not at all inclined to promote piety and virtue among their subjects, but that they studied chiefly their secular emoluments, appears from numberless evidences in this century. Let it suffice in this place to mention two. First, the franciscans and dominicans were employed in inlisting men into the service of the crusades by Gregory IX. the author of the impious bull mentioned above. These men engaged in the business with much ardor: and it often happened that persons, who in the warmth of zeal had taken the cross, repented afterwards, when they began to think seriously of the difficulties of the enterprise. The friars were employed to release such devotees from their vows, on the payment of a fine. It may easily be conceived, that much wealth would be amassed by this dispensing power.† Secondly, in 1242, Innocent IV. sent a provisional bull to king Henry III. of England, which informed him, that if

* 1 Tim. ii. 5. † Collier, vol. i.

he should happen to lay violent hands on an ecclesiastic, and to fall under the censure of the canons, he might be absolved on submitting to the customary penance!*

At this time, during the prevalence of the aristotelian philosophy, the doctrine of "grace of congruity" was in high repute: in other words, justification by men's own works, was insisted on: and while some decent show of respect was made in WORDS to the merits of Christ, the real meritorious objects, on which men were taught to place their hope, were some performances, by which they might, in a lower sense, DESERVE grace, and purchase the application of it to themselves.† Thus, a religion prevailed, which accommodated all sorts of sinners. Those of a more decent cast were taught to expect the divine favours by their own works, which deserve grace of congruity, and the most scandalous transgressors, by the doctrine of commutation for offences, might still obtain forgiveness: the exercise of munificence toward the hierarchy was sure to cover all crimes; but the humble and the contrite alone, who felt what sin is, and sighed for a remedy, found no relief to consciences, which could not admit the delusive refreshments provided by the papacy. These, either mourned in secret, and poured out their souls to that God, who says to his creatures, "seek and ye shall find," or if they united themselves in a body of faithful people, maintained the character of those "of whom the world was not worthy," and suffered the extremities of persecution, under the name of waldenses.

The scripture in all this time was neglected: the knowledge of the Hebrew tongue was in a great measure lost; and, as if the prince of darkness, through the medium of ignorance and superstition, had not sufficiently blinded the minds of men in religious concerns, even the learning itself, which was reviving, became a powerful instrument of augmenting the ge-

* Collier, vol. i. † Thirteenth article of the church of Eng.

neral obscurity. For the schoolmen, admitting no first principles, reasoned on every subject, and thus involved every religious notion in sceptical intricacy. The word of God itself was not appealed to, but Aristotle and the fathers were considered as decisive.*

That sophistical kind of learning, which Roger Bacon denied, was thriving throughout all this period. And in 1252 the college of divines at Paris, called Sorbonne, was erected by Robert De Sorbonne, a particular friend of Lewis IX.†

With what difficulties men who truly feared God in Europe at that day had to grapple, in working out their salvation, is abundantly evident from this review. Not even nobility of rank could secure such persons from the horrors of persecution. Some noblemen in Alsace had dared to reprehend the conduct of Innocent III. particularly his imposition of celibacy on the clergy. The bishops of that country had influence enough to oppress these innovators; and, in one day they burnt in the flames a hundred of them or their associates. Individuals, however, there doubtless were, who, having no opportunity of christian fellowship, worshipped God in secret, and found that UNCTION FROM THE HOLY ONE WHICH TEACHETH ALL THINGS.‡

Of the eastern churches scarce any thing worthy of relation occurs: yet it may be proper to mention, that in the year 1299 Othman, in the east, was proclaimed sultan and founded a new empire. The people afterwards, as well as the emperor, were called after his name. The mixed multitude, of which this people was composed, were the remains of four sultanies which had for some time subsisted in the neighbourhood of the river Euphrates. Thus the four angels which were bound in Euphrates were loosed, and under the name of TURKS succeeded the Saracens both in the propagation of mahometanism, and in diffusing

* Preface to 13 cent. Magdeburg.
† Mosheim, 13 cent. pars, ii. cap. i. sect. iii.
‡ 1 John, ii. 27.

the horrors of war.* Providence had destined them to scourge the people of Europe for their idolatry and flagitiousness; and Europe still repented not. But the divine prophecies were fulfilled—and "he may read that runneth."

CHAP. VI.

Authors and Eminent Persons in this Century.

ON the subject of the propagation of the gospel scarce any thing occurs in this age. The godly spirit of missionaries, which had been the glory of the declining church, was by this time exhausted; so extensively had the papal corruptions prevailed. The only accession to the christian name in Europe seems to have been the conversion, as it is called, of the Prussians, Lithuanians, and some adjoining provinces.

Prussia was one of the last regions of the north, which bowed under the yoke of the popedom. The ignorance, brutality, and ferocity of the inhabitants were uncommonly great. The Teutonic knights, after they had lost their possession in Palestine, took the cross against the Prussians, and, after a long and bloody war, forced them to receive the name of Christ; but I know no evidences of piety either in the missionaries or in the proselytes. The destruction, however, of the old idolatry, and the introduction of something of christianity, would eventually, at least, prove a blessing to this people.

Arsenius, bishop of Constantinople, will deserve a place in these memoirs. After that Constantinople was taken by the French and Venetians, the seat of the Greek empire had been transferred to Nice in Bithynia, of which metropolis, under the reign of

* Rev. ix.—Newton, 3 vol Prophecies, page 116.

Theodorus Lascaris, Arsenius was appointed bishop. He was renowned for piety and simplicity, and had lived a monastic life near Appollonia. Theodorus, a little before his death, constituted him one of the guardians of his son John, an infant in the sixth year of his age. But the integrity and virtue of the bishop were no security against the ambition and perfidy of the times. Michael Palæologus usurped the sovereignty; and Arsenius at length, with reluctance, overpowered by the influence of the nobility, consented to place the diadem on his head, with this express condition, that he should resign the empire to the royal infant when he should come to maturity.

Arsenius, after he had made this concession, had the mortification to find his pupil treated with perfect disregard; and probably repenting of what he had done, he retired from his see to a monastery. Sometime after, by a sudden revolution, Palæologus recovered Constantinople from the Latins; but, amidst all his successes, he found it necessary to his reputation to recal the bishop, and he fixed him in the metropolitan see. So great was the ascendency of the character of a virtuous prelate over the politics of an unprincipled usurper, though covered with secular glory! Palæologus, however, still dreaded the youth whom he had so deeply injured, and to prevent him from recovering the throne, he had recourse to the barbarous policy of putting out his eyes. Arsenius hearing this, excommunicated the emperor, who then made some pretences of repentance. But the bishop refused to admit him into the church; and Palæologus had the baseness to accuse him of certain crimes before an assembly of priests. Arsenius was convened before the venal assembly, condemned and banished to a small island of the Propontis. But, conscious of his integrity, he bore his sufferings with serenity and composure; and requesting that an account might be taken of the treasures of the church, he showed that three pieces of gold which he had earned by transcribing psalms, were the whole of his proper-

ty. This same emperor, who had the meanness, by false accusation, to expel Arsenius from his see, still confessed, how much wickedness stands in awe of virtue, by soliciting him to repeal his ecclesiastical censures. The deprived prelate, however, who never had been fond of sacerdotal dignity, remained content with his obscurity, and, to his last breath, refused the request of the usurper, who still retained the wages of his iniquity.*

Gibbon relates this story with no material variation from the account which I have given. But in his usual manner he ridicules and scoffs at the virtuous patriarch, and ascribes his professions of disinterestedness to sullenness and vainglory. How must an ecclesiastic conduct himself in order to procure the approbation of this historian? If the christian hero before us (for he seems to have truly feared God) had flattered and gratified the usurper in all his desires and demands, we should then have heard of his hypocrisy and ambition. Now that he voluntarily descends from a state of grandeur to poverty, disgrace, and exile, for the sake of a good conscience, he must be suspected of sullenness and pride. But by their fruits men are to be known; and by them, so far as they appear in this case, we may form a judgment of Arsenius, of Palæologus, and of Gibbon.

We have given an instance of a bishop, in the east, who feared God. Let us now behold a similar instance of uprightness in a bishop of the west. John Scot, bishop of Dunkeld, died in the year 1202. He was an Englishman, who had been archdeacon of St. Andrews, and thence was preferred to this see.† The man was conspicuous in that corrupt age for pastoral vigilance and a conscientious conduct. The county of Argyle was part of his diocese, and in that county the people understood only the Irish tongue. Scot, unwilling to receive emoluments from a people whose souls he could not edify, wrote to pope Clement III. desiring him to

* Cent. Magd. 461. Nicephones. † Collier, vol. i. page 411.

constitute Argyle a separate see, and to confer the bishopric on Evaldus his chaplain, who was well qualified for the purpose, and could speak Irish. "How, says he, can I give a comfortable account to the Judge of the world at the last day, if I pretend to teach those who cannot understand me? The revenues suffice for two bishops if we are content with a competency, and are not prodigal of the patrimony of Christ. It is better to lessen the charge, and increase the number of labourers in the Lord's vineyard." His whole request was granted, but the erection appears not to have been made till the year 1200. Clement the third died in 1191. Sentiments such as these, would have done honour to the purest ages. It seemed worth while to give some illustration to the opinion of the waldenses, "who professed that there were pious men, who lived in Babylon;" and John Scot deserves to be regarded as a practical teacher of bishops and pastors in all ages.

Great Britain furnishes us with a similar instance. Seval, archbishop of York, wrote to pope Alexander IV. against his violent and oppressive conduct, and exhorted him to follow Peter; to feed, not to devour the sheep of Christ. The particular occasion of this letter was, that the pope had intruded a person named Jordan into the deanery of York.* The courage and integrity of Seval enraged the pope, who, on some pretence, excommunicated him: he still however persisted, and withstood the intrusion of unworthy clergymen. The romanists harassed him with their utmost malevolence; but he was honoured by the people. He died in 1258, in the fourth year of his archbishopric, of which he seems to have kept possession till his decease.

Henry of Gaunt, archdeacon of Tournay, called "the famous teacher," wrote against ecclesiastical abuses: he maintained that a prelate was subject to law, was no lord, and that evil became not good, because the pope commanded or permitted it.†

* Cent. Magd. xiii. page 550. † Collier.

William de St. Amour, doctor of the Sorbonne, and professor of divinity in the university of Paris, was one of the greatest ornaments of christianity, which appeared in the Roman communion in this century. He had his name from St. Amour in Franche Compte, the place of his nativity. The mendicant orders seldom met with a more vigorous and able adversary. The dominicans in particular seemed desirous to engross all the power and influence of the university to themselves, while the doctors, resisting their unjust encroachments, excluded them from their society. In the year 1255 the debate was brought before pope Alexander IV. who, with intolerable arrogance, ordered the university not only to restore the dominicans to their former station, but also to grant them as many professorships as they should require.* Thus the friars not only intruded themselves into the dioceses and churches of the bishops and clergy, and, by the sale of indulgences and a variety of scandalous exactions, perverted whatever of good order and discipline remained in the church, but also began to domineer over the seminaries of learning. And in all this, as the pope was the principal leader, a despotism of the very worst nature was growing stronger and stronger in christendom. The doctors of the university of Paris now loudly joined in the cry of the secular clergy against the invasions of the mendicants; and indeed the papal power at this time ruled with absolute dominion. No pastor of a church could maintain any due authority over the laity, if a franciscan or dominican appeared in his parish to sell indulgences, and to receive confessions; and the most learned body of men at that time in Europe, were now subject to the government of those agents of popedom. The magistrates of Paris, at first, were disposed to protect the university, but the terror of the papal edicts reduced them at length to silence; and not only the do-

* In this brief account of St. Amour, I have endeavoured to give the substance of the information contained in the Centuriators, in Du Pin, Mosheim, and Fox the martyrologist.

minicans, but also the franciscans assumed whatever power they pleased in that famous seminary, and knew no other restrictions except what the Roman tyrant imposed upon them.

The genius and spirit of St. Amour were remarkably distinguished in this controversy. He wrote several treatises against the mendicant orders, and particularly a book published in the year 1255, concerning the perils of the latter days. Persuaded as he was that St. Paul's prophecy of the latter times* was fulfilling in the abominations of the friars, he laid down thirty nine marks of false teachers. He might have reduced them to a much smaller number; for, unavoidably, many of his marks will involve and imply one another. He exposes, however, with much discernment and perspicuity, the selfishness, hypocrisy, flattery, and sordid artifices of the friars: he particularly inveighs against their intrusion into the folds of other pastors, and their attempts to alienate the affections of the flock from their lawful teachers. An unworthy practice too common even in the best times of the church! and which, from the love of novelty and the instability so natural to mankind, has ever found but too much encouragement! St. Amour takes notice of this sort of opposition, which St. Paul met with at Corinth, and shows that it is the mark of a true pastor, not to be fond of building on another man's foundation, and not to boast in another man's line of things made ready to our hand.† This was to strike directly at the particular practices of the mendicants; who were also remarkably active in engaging the laity to enrich their orders, and omitted no methods to amplify their possessions. St. Amour, with a discernment remarkably keen for these times, explains our Saviour's precepts concerning the selling of what a man has, and the giving of it to the poor, showing that the inward affection, and practical preference in all cases of competition, are the things, which Christ

* 2 Tim. iii. 1. † 2 Cor. x. 16.

meant to inculcate, not the literally parting with all our property, of which generosity hypocrites boasted so much.

A few years before the unrighteous decision of the pope in favour of the friars, a fanatical book, under the title of "Introduction to the Everlasting Gospel," was published by a franciscan, which, by exalting Francis above Jesus Christ, and arrogating to his order the glory of reforming mankind by a new gospel substituted in the room of that of Christ, attempted to exalt that mendicant tribe to the height of divine estimation in the eyes of mankind. The universal ferment excited by this impious book, obliged Alexander IV. to suppress it in the year 1255, and he ordered it to be burnt in secret, willing to spare the reputation of the mendicants. But the university of Paris, which, in the same year, received that grievous injury from the pontiff which has been mentioned, insisted upon a public condemnation of the book, and Alexander, mighty as he was in power, was constrained, for once, to give way to the feelings of mankind; and he publicly committed the franciscan's performance to the flames. The next year, however, he revenged himself on St. Amour, by ordering his book, on the perils of the latter days, to be also committed to the flames, and by banishing him out of France. The persecuted champion retired into Franche Compte, the place of his birth; but, under the pontificate of Clement IV. he returned to the metropolis, wrote against the abuses of popery with persevering ardour, and died esteemed and regretted by all in the Roman church, who retained any regard for christian truth and piety. This seems the substance of all that is known concerning this extraordinary personage, who only wanted a more favourable soil, in which he might bring to maturity the fruits of those protestant principles, the seeds of which he nourished in his breast.

John* de Poliaco, a disciple of St. Amour, trode in

* Magd. cent. 13.

the steps of his master, and insisted on the rights of the parochial clergy to hear the confessions of the laity, and condemned the general license of discharging that function which the pope gave to the mendicant orders. Both parties seem involved in the superstition of auricular confession; but the mendicants evidently transgressed the bounds of justice. It may, perhaps, be doubted what was the real character of John: this, however, is certain, he was condemned by papal authority in the year 1277.

Francis of Assisium, founder of the minor friars, was doubtless an extraordinary character. He was born at Assisium in the ecclesiastical state, and was disinherited by his father, who was disgusted at his enthusiasm. In 1209* he founded his order, which was but too successful in the world. His practices of devotion were monstrous, and he seems ever to have been the prey of a whimsical imagination. Pride and deceit are not uncommonly connected with a temper like his, and he gave a memorable instance of both. It is certain that he was impressed with five wounds on his body, resembling the wounds of Christ crucified. It is certain also, that he pretended to have received the impression as a miraculous favour from heaven. To describe the particulars of such a story would be to descend beneath the dignity of history. Let it suffice to have mentioned in general what is authentic, whence the reader may form some notion of the truth of St. Paul's prediction concerning the man whose coming was to be after the working of Satan with lying wonders.† The papacy indeed was full of such figments at this time. Francis sought for glory among men, by his follies and absurdities, and he found the genius of the age so adapted to his own, that he gained immense admiration and applause. He died in 1226, in the forty fifth year of his age.‡ Posterity saw his order splendid in secular greatness, though under

* Alban Butler. † 2 Thess. ii. 9.
‡ Alban Butler, vol. x.—Cave, vol. i. page 704.

the mask of poverty; and we have* already recounted the dreams of one of his disciples, who was no mean imitator of his master. The serious and intelligent follower of Jesus will not be staggered at such disgustful counterfeits of christian virtue. He will recognise in them the hand of Satan, deluding with fictitious holiness, men who had despised that holiness which was genuine. And thus they who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness, were justly given over to diabolical infatuations.† Nothing has happened but according to scriptural revelation; and the duty of humbly and seriously attending to the divine oracles as our true wisdom and felicity, is made evident.

Let us dwell a moment on his contemporary Dominic, the founder of the dominicans. He was a Spaniard, born in the year 1170. In fictitious miracles and monstrous austerities he resembled Francis.‡ We have seen how he laboured among the waldenses. Butler observes that he had no hand in the cruelties of the crusades, and asserts that he was not connected with the inquisition; though he owns that the project of this court was first formed in a council of Toulouse in 1229, and that in 1233, two dominican friars were the first inquisitors. Let us exercise as much candor as possible on a subject very much controverted, and admit with a learned historian,§ that Dominic was an inquisitor, but not in the most offensive sense of the word. Let it be remembered, however, that candour is due also to the waldenses, whom the learned roman catholic, to whose industry I am repeatedly obliged, describes, from Le Gendre's History of France, as a combination of shocking banditti, and whom he accuses of holding the unlawfulness of oaths, and of putting men to death. These charges have been sufficiently confuted by what we have seen from their own memoirs. The biographer who found it so very

* Viz. The author of "Introduction to the Everlasting Gospel."
† 2 Thess. ii. ‡ Butler, vol. viii. § Mosheim, vol. i. page 698.

easy to acquit Dominic, should not have condemned the waldenses on such erroneous information.

Butler also commends the piety of Simon Montfort, the persecutor of the albigenses, and the father of the famous malcontent earl of Leicester, who flourished in the reign of king Henry III. And though he condemns the barbarities of the crusades, he represents the waldenses as the enemies of public peace, and the laws of civil society. In this the learned author speaks against the concurrent testimony of the princes under whom they lived, and who owned them to be the best of subjects.

To return to Dominic. He seems to have shown no one evidence of genuine humility, or of evangelical piety. In religious pride he lived; and, it is much to be feared he died in the same temper and in the greatest ignorance. For in his last hours he promised his brethren that he would never forget them, when he was gone to God. If persons who inquire into the nature of true religion, examined with more precision the true marks of pride on the one hand, or of humility on the other, they would not be so easily imposed on by false pretensions.

This same Dominic constituted the rosary, or the psalter of the virgin Mary. To illustrate this subject, which, though egregiously trifling in its own nature, deserves a few moments' consideration, as tending to give a just view of the religious taste then in fashion, it is to be observed, that the old anchorets counted the number of their prayers by grains or such like marks.* Those who could not read nor recite the psalter by heart, supplied that deficiency by repeating the Lord's prayer. And thus illiterate persons, at canonical hours, performed devotions corresponding to those of the psalter recited by the clergy and others; and they were taught, no doubt, that their simple performances would be equally meritorious with the religious exercises of the more learned. On

* Butler, vol. x.

these principles paternosters were counted by the studs of the belts; and Peter the hermit, famous for promoting the first crusades, instructed the illiterate laity to say a number of paternosters and ave marys in lieu of each canonical hour of the church offices. And thus, I imagine, he attempted to qualify his enthusiastic crusaders for the kingdom of heaven. But to Dominic the glory of completing this scheme of MECHANICAL devotion belongs. He directed men to recite fifteen decads of Hail Mary, &c. and one paternoster before each decad. Thus men were taught to repeat a hundred and fifty times the angel's salutation of the virgin, interlarded with a number of paternosters, and to believe that this practice would be as acceptable as the recital of the hundred and fifty psalms. I suppose very zealous devotees would go through all this work at one time; perhaps others, less laborious, might perform it at successive intervals. But is this the spirit of GRACE AND SUPPLICATION* promised to the christian church? Is this the spirit of adoption, whereby men cry Abba Father? What is it but the spirit of bondage and miserable superstition, the religion of the lips, a selfrighteous drudgery of so much devotional work, with a view to purchase the remission of sins, and to ease the consciences of men who lived without either understanding the doctrines, or practising the precepts of scripture? Observe hence, with how much propriety the waldenses, as we have seen, taught men the true nature of prayer; and, what a dreadful vacuum of all true piety was now the portion of nominal christians, who had departed from the grace of Christ Jesus!

So powerful, however, is the genuine operation of the divine Spirit, that it can purify a humble soul by faith in Christ, and exhibit a brief assemblage of christian virtues, even in the gulf of superstition. This seems to have been the case with a great personage of this century, whose character deserves par-

* Zech. xii. 10.

ticular illustration. This was Lewis IX. commonly called St. Lewis, the son of Lewis VIII. who invaded England in the reign of king John. His mother Blanche brought him up with much religious care.* "I love you, my son, said she, with all the tenderness of which a mother is capable; but I would infinitely rather see you fall dead at my feet, than that you should commit a mortal sin." Lewis felt the daily impression of this thought on his mind. In his minority Blanche completed the reduction of the Albigenses, a dreadful work, which has already engaged our painful attention. How far Blanche herself might be imposed on by the slanders so copiously poured on the supposed heretics, it is not easy to say. As to Lewis, however, a minor, it may fairly be presumed, that he understood not the merits of the cause. As he grew up, his devotional spirit appeared consistently strong and equally fervent. He often invited men of a religious character to his table; and, when some objected to him, that he spent too much time at his devotions, he answered, "if that time were spent in hunting and gaming, I should not be so rigorously called to account for the employment of my vacant hours." He lived a life of selfdenial: he banished from the court all diversions prejudicial to morals. No man who broke the rules of decorum in conversation, could find admission into his presence. He frequently retired for the purpose of secret prayer. So comprehensive were the powers of his understanding, and so well qualified was he to excel in a variety of employments, that he personally administered justice to his subjects, with the greatest attention and impartiality. The effect was long remembered after his decease; and those who were dissatisfied with the judicial processes of their own times, with a sigh expressed a wish that justice might be administered as in the days of St. Lewis. Those who were guilty of blasphemy, were, by his own order, marked on the

* Alban Butler, vol. viii.

lips, some say on the forehead, with a hot iron. A rich citizen of Paris was punished in this manner; and Lewis silenced the complaints of those who murmured at his severity, by observing, that he would rather suffer punishment himself, than omit to inflict it on transgressors.

Uprightness and integrity have seldom more strongly marked the character of any prince, than they did that of Lewis. He suffered not the nobles to oppress their vassals; and the exercise of sovereign power was, in his hands, a blessing to mankind. A nobleman had hanged three children for hunting rabbits: Lewis having investigated the fact, condemned him to capital punishment: a rare instance of the love of justice breaking through the forms of aristocratical oppression, which at that time domineered through Europe! It was not to be supposed that the feudal lords would, without emotion, hear of a sentence so uncommon, pronounced on an offender of such rank. They earnestly interceded for the nobleman's life; and Lewis was so far prevailed on by the maxims of the times, as to spare the offender's life; but he deprived him of the greatest part of his estate.

Truth and sincerity seem to have pervaded the soul of Lewis. In all treaties and negotiations he was conscientiously exact; and foreign states frequently referred matters of dispute to his arbitration. In him it appeared that wisdom and truth, sound policy and christian sincerity, are not at variance in the nature of things. And whatever disadvantages he might seem to undergo by a generous and disinterested conduct, he found them to be amply compensated by the respect and veneration attached to his character, and the confidence reposed in his justice by all mankind.

With great pleasure I dwell a little on a character, so singularly excellent. An elegant historian* observes, that "he united to the mean and abject superstition of a monk, the magnanimity of the hero, the in-

* Hume, vol. ii. page 190.

tegrity of the patriot, and the humanity of the philosopher." So cautiously does he abstain from praising christianity, even while he gives a warm encomium to a most upright christian! All the notice which he deigns to give of his religious principles, is an insinuation, that they were mere monasticism. I confess the superstition of the times had deeply tinctured Lewis; and it is to be regretted, that his eminent station gave him not that access to the protestants of his own dominions, who at that time adorned the real gospel of Christ, which might, under God, have emancipated his soul from papal bondage, and enabled him to shine with a salutary light among the very best christian princes. Disadvantageously situated as he was, he could only acquire and maintain the spirit of a christian for himself: the whole tenor of his life demonstrated the sincerity of his christian faith and love: but, enslaved by papal domination, he could not emancipate his subjects. It is certain, however, that mere superstition could never have exhibited so steady and consistent a piety as that of Lewis; and it seems no less so, that mere philosophy, in whatever sense we may suppose the historian to have used that vague and ill defined term, was equally incompetent to produce such a character as that of this prince. It was the christian, the man of faith, of humility, and of prayer, which exhibited the personage before us. Let us attend a little to the FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT, which sprang from christian principles in this monarch; for the course of our history gives us very seldom an opportunity of illustrating the power of the gospel in national and political transactions.

The weak and distracted government of our king Henry III. gave to Lewis frequent occasions of exercising that secular chicane, and that spirit of artful intrigue, in which mere statesmen abound. The English were divided among themselves, and Henry held the balance of power among them with a tremulous hand. But Lewis took no advantage of their divisions, nor

attempted to expel them from their provinces, which they still held in France. John, the father of Henry, had by a sentence of attainder, seconded by the arms of Philip Augustus, the grandfather of Lewis, been deprived of Normandy, and some other provinces in France. Lewis had scruples of conscience, which affected his mind, in regard to the detention of those provinces which had fallen to him by way of inheritance. He even expressed some intention of restoring them, and was only prevented by reflecting on the justice of punishing John as a felon and a murderer, who had barbarously slain his nephew prince Arthur. He never interposed in English affairs, but with an intention to compose the differences between the king and his nobility; he recommended every healing measure to both parties; and he exerted himself with all his might to bring to a sense of his duty the earl of Leicester, that same enterprising rebel, who, after a series of splendid crimes, was at last defeated and slain by Edward prince of Wales, the son of king Henry. He made a treaty with England, at a time when the affairs of the kingdom were at the lowest ebb: but he took no advantage of his own superior situation in the terms of the treaty. He made some liberal concessions: he insured to Henry the peaceable possession of Guienne; and only required him to cede Normandy and his other provinces, which he had no prospect of ever regaining. Afterwards, when by a rare instance of confidence, the king of England and his barons agreed to refer the settlement of their differences to Lewis, that equitable monarch decided in a manner which showed his equal regard to the prerogatives of the crown, and the rights of the people.

In his days, Gingis Kan, the Tartar, threatened to deluge Europe by his victorious arms. The consternation was general; but Lewis, said to his mother, "what have we to fear? we shall either live conquerors, or die martyrs."

The spirit of the crusades was adapted to the superstitious habits of Lewis, and he fell into the snare.

From this quarter alone, he, who in other respects was the father and friend of his people, was unhappily led into a conduct prejudicial to society. Having been brought to the brink of the grave by an illness in 1244, when he was beginning to recover he took the vow of the cross; and, as soon as he was able, raised an army and made an expedition into the holy land. Before his departure, he took care to make large restitution for injuries inadvertently committed throughout the kingdom: he took the most exact care of the morals of his soldiers, so far as he had opportunity and ability; and, in the whole course of his military measures, avoided the unnecessary effusion of blood by saving the life of every infidel whom he could take prisoner. It is a deplorable instance of the power of the "god of this world"* over our fallen race, that a monarch of so much good sense, and of so great virtue and piety, could yet be engaged in a cause so imprudent and chimerical. Good men, however, will act a consistent part, even where they are evidently mistaken in their object. Lewis was still the same man; and the fear of God was his predominant principle of action. Let civil history relate his military prowess, the efforts of his prodigious valour, and the series of his calamities. When he was taken prisoner by the Saracens, and was menaced with death, he behaved with his usual fortitude and concern for his soldiers. At length being ransomed, he visited Palestine. Hearing of the death of his mother Blanche, he discovered much filial tenderness on the occasion. As he returned to Europe after a disastrous expedition, three sermons were preached every week on board his ship; and the sailors and soldiers were catechized and instructed, Lewis bearing a part in all the religious offices. He returned to Paris after an absence of almost six years. Here he was visited by our Henry VII. to whom he said, "I think myself more happy, that God hath given me patience in suf-

* 2 Cor. iv. 4.

fering, than if I had conquered the world." We are told that many Saracens, induced by his piety, received christian baptism; and that he sent two monks to preach to the Tartars; but the vices of christians were so flagrant, as to defeat all these good intentions.

Devoted as Lewis was to the popedom, he could not but see the enormous ecclesiastical abuses, which at that time prevailed. He, therefore, made laws against papal encroachments and against simony; and prohibited the rapines of the roman pontiff by an edict, in which he expresses himself to this effect; "the exactions and heavy impositions of money, imposed on our kingdom by the court of Rome, through which our territories are miserably impoverished, we will not suffer to be collected."* Words were no empty sounds with a prince of his steadiness and fortitude; and, by the vigor and wisdom of his administration, France seems to have been much exempted from that intolerable oppression of the Roman tyrant, under which England at that time groaned. But Lewis undertoook a second crusade, laid siege to Tunis, on the coast of Africa, and died before that city. On the approach of death, he gave very salutary advice to Philip his eldest son. "Avoid wars," says he, "with christians, and spare the innocent subjects of your enemy. Discountenance blasphemy, games of chance, drunkenness, and impurity. Lay no heavy burdens on your subjects. I pray our Lord Jesus Christ to strengthen you in his service, and always to increase his grace in you; and I beg that we may together see, praise and honour him to eternity. Suffer patiently; being persuaded that you deserve much more punishment for your sins; and then tribulation will be your gain. Love and converse with the godly: banish the vicious from your company: delight to hear profitable sermons: wherever you are, permit none, in your presence, to deal in slanderous or indecent

* Cent. Magd. xiii. 329.

conversation. Hear the poor with patience: and, where your own interest is concerned, stand for your adversary against yourselfe, till the truth appear." As Lewis grew more feeble, he desired no mention whatever to be made to him of temporal things, and scarce spake at all, except to his confessor. He prayed with tears for the conversion of infidels and sinners; and besought God, that his army might have a safe retreat, lest through weakness of the flesh, they should deny Christ. He repeated aloud, "Lord, I will enter into thine house; I will worship in thy holy temple, and give glory to thy name. Into thine hands I commend my spirit." These were his last words; and he breathed out his soul in the year 1270, aged fifty five years. In better times, and with clearer evangelical light, what might not have been expected from such a character? We have seen the most abject superstition combined with the most dignified uprightness. We have seen christianity degenerated indeed, and disgraced with superstition, but still amiable and fruitful in good works; and in such good works, as no man of mere secular wisdom could ever pretend to. The name and fundamental truths of Jesus, to a mind like his, humble and contrite through divine influence, exhibited a rare assemblage of virtues. And one may ask the most bigoted admirer of modern French philosophy and republicanism, to show a single person, who has taken an active part in the late revolutions of that infatuated nation, that can at all be compared to Lewis IX. in sincerity, philanthropy, and modesty.

This century saw also a pope, who will deserve to be commemorated in the annals of the church of Christ. Peter Celestine was* born in Apulia, about the year 1221, and lived as an hermit in a little cell. He was admitted into holy orders; but after that, he lived five years in a cave on Mount Morroni near Sulmona. He was molested with internal temptations,

* Butler, vol. v.

which his confessor told him were a stratagem of the enemy, that would not hurt him, if he despised it. He founded a monastery at Mount Morroni, in 1274. The see of Rome having been vacant two years and three months, Celestine was unanimously chosen pope on account of the fame of his sanctity. The archbishop of Lyons,* presenting him with the instrument of his election, conjured him to submit to the vocation. Peter, in astonishment, prostrated himself on the ground; and, after he had continued in prayer a considerable time, he rose up, and, fearing to oppose the will of God, he consented to his election, and took the name of Celestine V.

Since the days of the first Gregory, no pope had ever assumed the pontifical dignity with more purity of intention. But he had not Gregory's talents for business and government; and the Roman see was immensely more corrupt in the thirteenth than it was in the sixth century. Celestine soon became sensible of his incapacity: he was lost, as in a wilderness. He attempted to reform abuses, to retrench the luxury of the clergy, to do, in short, what he found totally impracticable. He committed mistakes and exposed himself to the ridicule of the scornful. His conscience was kept on the rack through a variety of scruples, from which he could not extricate himself; and, from his ignorance of the world, and of canon law, he began to think he had done wrong in accepting the office. He spent much of his time in retirement: nor was he easy there, because his conscience told him, that he ought to be discharging the pastoral office. Overcome with anxiety, he asked cardinal Cajetan, whether he might not abdicate? It was answered, yes. Celestine gladly embraced the opportunity of assuming again the character of brother Peter, after he had been distressed with the phantom of dignity for four or five months. He abdicated in 1294. The last act of his pontificate was worthy of the since-

* Vertot's Knights of Malta, vol. ii.

rity of his character. He made a constitution, that the pontiff might be allowed to abdicate if he pleased.* It is remarkable, that no pope has, since that time, taken the benefit of this constitution.

That same Cajetan, who had encouraged his resignation, contrived to be elected his successor, and took the name of Boniface VIII. Though Peter had given the most undoubted proofs of his love of obscurity, and desired nothing more than that he might spend the rest of his days in private devotion, yet Boniface, who measured other men by himself, apprehended and imprisoned him, lest he should revoke his resignation. Peter gave such proofs of sincerity, as convinced all persons, except Boniface himself, that nothing was to be dreaded from his ambition. The tyrant sent him into the castle of Fumone, under a guard of soldiers: the old hermit was shut up in a hideous dungeon; and his rest was interrupted by the jailors, who nightly disturbed his sleep. These insults and hardships he seems to have born with christian patience and meekness. He sent this message to Boniface, "I am content; I desired a cell, and a cell you have given me." But AMBITION IS MADE OF STERNER STUFF, than to yield to the suggestions of conscience or humanity. In the year 1296, after an imprisonment of ten months, Celestine died of a fever, most probably contracted by the unworthy treatment which he received.

I have now mentioned the principal facts recorded concerning Celestine. There are no memorials of the internal exercises of his mind, but the discerning reader will be apt to rank him with those of whom "†the world was not worthy." After his decease, the hypocritical Boniface, and all the cardinals, attended his obsequies at St. Peter's. This is that Boniface, whose crimes disgraced the end of this century, and the beginning of the next: of whom it is said, that he entered the pontificate as a fox, lived as a lion, and

* Platina. † Heb. xi. 38.

died as a dog: and who, having tormented the christian world for eight years, met at length with a punishment worthy of his crimes, dying in prison under the greatest agonies. This same man also published a decretal, "that the Roman pontiff ought to be judged by none, though, by his conduct, he drew innumerable souls with himself to hell!"

Thomas Aquinas, called the angelical doctor, filled the christian world, in this century, with the renown of his name. He was a dominican, who, by his comments on four books of Peter Lombard, master of the sentences, and, particularly, by his expositions of Aristotle, made himself more famous than most men of that time, on account of his skill in scholastic divinity. His penetration and genius were of the first order; but he excelled in that subtile and abstruse kind of learning only, which was better calculated to strike the imagination, than to improve the understanding. He maintained what is commonly called the doctrine of freewill, though he largely quoted Augustin, and retailed many of his pious and devotional sentiments. His aristotelian subtilties enabled him to give a specious colour to the absurd doctrine of transubstantiation, which in him found a vehement defender. The new festival of the body of Christ was, by this divine, adorned with an idolatrous ritual, which strengthened the fashionable superstitions.* He was the great supporter of the doctrine of supererogation, which, at the same time that it established the most pernicious views of selfrighteousness, by leaving the disposal of the superfluous treasure of the merits of saints to the discretion of the papal see, added one strong link to the chain which dragged the nations into ecclesiastical slavery. Nor were his voluminous writings much calculated to instruct mankind. For he supposed, that whatever sense any passage of scrip-

* I have consulted the Centuriators, Mosheim, Du Pin, and Butler, concerning the tenets and writings of this doctor, and, on the whole, can find but little matter, which may properly belong to this history. A similar observation may be made concerning Bonaventura.

ture would possibly admit in grammatical construction, it was the real sense intended by the holy Spirit: whence, the imaginations of every sportive genius were regarded as of divine authority. And thus the scriptures were perverted and exposed to the ridicule of profane minds. Nor were they rescued from this miserable abuse, till the era of the reformation. His sentiments on the all important doctrine of justification, were deplorably corrupt; and that "*good works deserve grace of congruity," was one of his favourite axioms. His notions of the nature of repentance were egregiously trifling. On the other hand, there are in his writings, and particularly in the account of his discourses during his last sickness, traces of great devotion, and a strain of piety very similar to that of Augustin. But I confess, that, interlarded as they are with romish idolatry, and an unbounded attachment to the pope as the infallible guide of the church, I feel no inclination to transcribe them; because I am throughly convinced of the frauds by which the dominicans supported the popedom; and because some glare of solemn devotion seemed necessary to be employed by the agents of that see, in order to maintain the reputation of a system intolerably corrupt.

Bonaventura, a franciscan doctor, may be briefly dismissed with similar observations. He also held the same corrupt sentiments concerning justification, with Thomas Aquinas. Nor does there appear in the whole Roman church, in this century, a single divine, who could give to a serious inquirer the scriptural answer to the question, "what shall I do to be saved?"† Hence, all who felt trouble of conscience, were led to betake themselves to salvos, with which the blind leaders of the blind supplied them. Among these the delusive invention of purgatory was the most remarkable; and in the romish church it upholds its credit to this day. Before the true scripture doctrine of jus-

* See article xiii. of the church of England. † Acts xvi. 30, 31.

tification it cannot stand for a moment; and whoever applies this doctrine with unfeigned faith to a guilty conscience, such an one will find relief, and will be led into the paths of true peace and genuine holiness. He may indeed and ought to pity those, who are deluded by so unscriptural and superstitious a notion as that of purgatory, but he himself will never be led captive by it. It may be worth while to state the reasons on which the advocates of the papacy support the doctrine of purgatory in their own words.*— "Some part of the debt, which the penitent owes to the divine justice, may remain uncancelled. Certainly some sins are venial, which deserve not eternal death; yet, if not effaced by condign penance in this world, they must be punished in the next. The smallest sin excludes a soul from heaven, so long as it is not blotted out. But no man will say that a venial sin, which destroys not sanctifying grace, will be punished with eternal torments. Hence there must be a relaxation of some sin in the world to come. Venial sins of surprise are readily effaced by penance, as we hope, through the divine mercy. Venial sins of malice, or those committed with full deliberation, are of a different nature, far more grievous and fatal. They are usually sins of habit, and lead even to mortal sin."

Thus, by the help of certain distinctions of sins, conclusions no where warranted in scripture were drawn, and mankind were led to look on purgatory as a relief to troubled consciences. If they had not effaced their guilt by penance in this life, it was hoped that purgatory, assisted by the prayers and donations made in behalf of the deceased, would release them afterwards from damnation. How strongly men were hence encouraged to live in sin all their days, is but too plain. And it seems wonderful, that so learned and sensible an author as A. Butler should build a doctrine of such practical importance on mere conjectures without the least scriptural ground. But on the other

* Butler, vol. xi. page 27.

hand, whoever sees the real guilt and defilement of sin, of all sorts of sin, and rests wholly and entirely for acceptance with God on the righteousness, atonement, and intercession of Jesus Christ, finds at once the power of superstition and of licentiousness subdued; and he knows how to possess his soul IN PERFECT PEACE; and to serve his heavenly Father "without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of his life."* The instruction, which lays open this secret, is given by every real protestant teacher of divinity; instruction, which, we see, the two great admired doctors and supposed luminaries of the thirteenth century were unable to give.

It is much to be wished that we could know more of Hugo, the Burgundian, a Roman cardinal, who wrote comments on the whole scriptures, and honestly exposed the impiety and wickedness of the ecclesiastics of his time. He died at Rome, in the year 1262.†

Guilhelmus,‡ bishop of Paris, flourished about the year 1230. On christian justification, and other fundamentals, he thought more justly than many of his contemporaries. He wrote on various religious subjects, and particularly on the collation of benefices; on which point he held that no man could be a pluralist, without the loss of his soul, unless the value of his preferments was exceedingly small. He was a man of learning and piety.

On this question the care of the ancient church had been remarkable. In the fourth general council of Chalcedon, by the tenth canon, pluralities were condemned: also at the second council of Nice, in the eighth century. In the sixth council of Paris, held in the year 829, the same practice was pronounced unlawful. And so strongly did the voice of natural conscience, and the common sense of propriety and decorum prevail against the torrent of fashionable corruptions, in speculation at least, that even in the

* Luke i. 74. † See Burnet's Pastoral Care. ‡ Ibid. 493.

twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the possession of scandalous pluralities was condemned in a papal council, namely, the fourth council of the Lateran. *

Christianus, bishop of Mentz, was accused before the pope as a person incapable of governing the church. For he had refused to be concerned in military and secular employments, and had given himself up to the pastoral care. In these times such a conduct was deemed contemptible at least, if not criminal: after two years' residence at Mentz he resigned; and, not long after, he died in the year 1251.†

CHAP. VII.

Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln.

ROBERT‡ GROSSETESTE was born probably about the year 1175: he seems to have been a person of obscure parentage at Stradbrook in Suffolk. He studied at Oxford, where learning was very zealously cultivated; and there he laid the foundation of his skill in the Greek tongue, the knowledge of which had been introduced from France and Italy. Hence he made himself master of Aristotle, whose works, though idolized, had hitherto been only read through the medium of translation: and at Oxford also he studied the sacred language of the old testament. He afterwards went to Paris, the most renowned seminary then in Europe, where he still prosecuted the study of the Hebrew and the Greek, and became a perfect master of the French language. Here also he became, according to the ideas of the age, a consummate theologian and philosopher. Knowledge was then

* Cent. Magd. 483. † Id. cent. Magd.

‡ I am obliged principally to Mr. Pegge's late valuable publication of the life of this distinguished prelate for the following account; but I have also consulted Fox the martyrologist and other authors.

very rude and inaccurate; but Grosseteste, doubtless, possessed all which Europe could furnish. It is not, therefore to be wondered at, that he should have been looked on as a magician: the same thing happened to the famous Roger Bacon, who flourished something later.

Grosseteste was a divine of principal note in the university of Oxford. He associated with BOTH the mendicant orders, and was the first lecturer in the franciscan school of that seminary. He seems to have been always serious in religion according to the degree of light which he had: and, as his views were very indistinct, it is not surprising, that he was, for a time at least, captivated by the appearance of sanctity in those deceivers of mankind.

In the year 1235, he was elected, by the dean and chapter, bishop of Lincoln; and king Henry III. confirmed their choice. That see was then much more extensive than it is at this day: and the new bishop, who was of an ardent and active spirit, immediately undertook to reform abuses. For this end he usually went through the several archdeaconries and deaneries, requiring the attendance of the clergy, and admonishing the people likewise to attend, that their children might be confirmed, that they might make their confession, and hear the word of God. Robert himself usually preached to the clergy; and some friar of the dominican or franciscan order lectured the people. The friars of these orders were now his particular favourites; and he encouraged them to hear the confessions of the laity, and to enjoin them penance. The secular clergy were naturally enough offended at this predilection of the bishop: they thought that their own rights were invaded. In the mean time the friars themselves gradually brought the new orders into disrepute by exercising an unlimited dominion over the consciences of the laity, and by enriching themselves at their expense. But Robert, who measured the minds of others by his own honesty and simplicity, and who was pleased with the superior learning,

zeal, and activity of these new instruments of the papacy, saw not as yet the evil tendency of their measures, and, therefore, he encouraged their labours. The days were evil: the zealous bishop could not think of giving countenance to the secular clergy who were ignorant and vicious, in preference to the friars: and, in his zeal for promoting godliness, of which his notions were confused and indigested, he was glad of those assistants, who seemed most cheerfully to cooperate with his own benevolent intentions.

But though he was far more disposed to favour the two new orders than they deserved, he was severe in his censures of the other more ancient orders, and was very strict in his visitations of them. In both parts of his conduct he was influenced by the same upright principle: the hypocrisy indeed of the dominicans and franciscans escaped his penetration; but he could not be deceived by the gross ignorance and dissolute manners of the more ancient orders. Such were the methods by which the prince of darkness seems to have prolonged the reign of antichrist. The orders of ancient times, having filled up their season in supporting the MAN OF SIN by a specious appearance of holiness, when this was gone, other orders arose, who undertook the same task, and defended the system of iniquity by a severer course of life and manners. Even such men as the bishop of Lincoln, rigidly conscientious and upright, were seduced, undesignedly, to lend their aid in imposing on mankind. In the mean time, the true cure of these evils, namely, the light of scripture and of its genuine doctrines, was generally unknown in christendom.

One of the most salutary offices of the art of criticism is to distinguish the genuine works of the ancients from the spurious. This was unknown in Grosseteste's time: and hence the laborious bishop was induced to employ his learning in translating "the Testaments of the twelve Patriarchs" out of Greek into Latin. He thought that he had, by this means, enriched Europe with a valuable monument of sacred

antiquity. It is amazing, that the bishop should place so contemptible a performance on an equal footing with the holy scriptures. It scarcely seemed worth while to mention such a circumstance, except as a demonstration that the ignorance of the times was exceedingly great, and that the difficulties of acquiring divine knowledge were then immense beyond our conception.

Let it suffice to mention in general, that the bishop of Lincoln was, partly through his love of justice, and partly through the excessive warmth of his temper, frequently engaged in quarrels with convents, and with other agents of the pope. At one time he was even excommunicated by the convent of Canterbury: but this ecclesiastical sentence was so frequently prostituted to the basest purposes, and was so often pronounced on frivolous occasions, that it had, in a great measure, lost its influence on the minds of men. Grosseteste treated it, in his own case, with scorn and contempt, and continued to labour in the promotion of piety, and in the redress of abuses, with unwearied vigour and activity, but, at the same time, under all the disadvantages, which the darkness of the times and an eager and vehement temper may be supposed to occasion. So long a course of consistent steadiness, integrity, and so much fear of God, attended with so small a degree of spiritual light, as in the case of this bishop, is not a common phenomenon in the church of God. But the work of the holy Spirit in religion is diversified with an endless variety of operations. The instance before us deserves attention. The holy soul of Robert Grosseteste, which was favoured with so much discernment, as just to understand and receive the essentials of godliness, and no more, could not endure with patience the manifold corruptions of the times. He took pains in his diocese to reform various gross abuses, among which was the practice of clergymen acting plays, and maintaining connexion with Jews. The friars were still his favourites: and he rebuked the rectors and vicars of

his diocese, because they neglected to hear them preach, and because they discouraged the people from attending and confessing to them. His devoted attachment to the popedom appears hence in a striking light, and still more so in some other transactions which it is not necessary to particularize. He continued to patronize the friars. These were his most intimate companions: with these he used to hold conferences on the scriptures; and at one time he had thoughts of entering into the franciscan order himself. But however defective he was in doctrine, he was exceedingly strict in his views of morality: and, like all reformers of the merely active class, who labour to promote external good conduct, with low and inadequate ideas of christian principle, he excited great offence and disgust, and produced very little solid benefit to mankind.

Events, however, occurred, which in some measure unfolded to the eyes of the bishop the real characters of the friars. In 1247, two English franciscans were sent into England with credentials to extort money for the pope. They applied to the prelates and abbots, but seem, at this time at least, to have met with little success. Grosseteste was amazed at the insolence and pompous appearance of the friars, who assured him that they had the pope's bull, and who earnestly demanded six thousand marks for the contribution of the diocese of Lincoln; "Friars, answered he, with all reverence to his holiness be it spoken, the demand is as dishonourable as it is impracticable. The whole body of the clergy and people are concerned in it equally with me. For me then to give a definitive answer in an instant to such a demand, before the sense of the kingdom is taken upon it, would be rash and absurd." The native good sense of the bishop suggested this answer; but the true antichristian character of the pope was as yet unknown to Grosseteste. The blood of our Saviour was about the same time pretended to be brought into England, and he had the weakness to vindicate the delusion.

The bishop continued still to exert himself with the most upright intentions for the good of the church. But, it was his usual infelicity to "*labour in the fire for very vanity," because he had no distinct perception of the fundamental truths of christianity. The value of solid and perspicuous views of evangelical truth was never more forcibly exhibited than in this case. Most bishops or pastors, who have been possessed of this advantage, though inferior to Grosseteste in magnanimity, industry, and activity, have yet, if truly pious, far exceeded him in promoting the real good of the church. He translated the works of John Damascenus, and of the spurious Dionysius the Areopagite, and illustrated them with commentaries; the former author was learned indeed, but was the great patron of image worship; and the latter was a contemptible visionary.

It was in the case of practical evils, not of doctrinal errors, that the bishop of Lincoln showed the strength of his discernment: in regard to these he never failed to act with sincerity and vigour. In 1248, he obtained, at a great expense, from Innocent IV. letters to empower him to reform the religious orders. If he had understood at that time the real character of antichrist, he would have foreseen the vanity of all attempts to reform the church, which were grounded on papal authority. The rectitude, however, of his own mind was strikingly apparent in the transaction. He saw with grief the waste of large revenues made by the monastic orders; and being supported by the pope, as he thought, he determined to take into his own hand the rents of the religious houses, most probably with a design to institute and ordain vicarages in his diocese, and to provide for the more general instruction of the people. But the monks appealed to the pope; and Grosseteste, in his old age, was obliged to travel to Lyons, where Innocent resided. Roman venality was now at its height, and the pope deter-

* Habak. ii. 13.

mined the cause against the bishop. Grieved and astonished at so unexpected a decision Grosseteste said to Innocent, "I relied on your letters and promises, but am entirely disappointed." What is that to you, answered the pope, you have done your part, and we are disposed to favour them: IS YOUR EYE EVIL, BECAUSE I AM GOOD? With such shameless effrontery can wicked men trifle with scriptural passages. The bishop, in a low tone, but so as to be heard, said with indignation, O money, how great is thy power, especially at the court of Rome! The remark was bold and indignant, but perfectly just. It behooved Innocent to give some answer; and he used the common method of wicked men in such cases, namely, to retort the accusation. "You English, said he, are always grinding and impoverishing one another. How many religious men, persons of prayer and hospitality, are you striving to depress, that you may sacrifice to your own tyranny and avarice!" So spake the most unprincipled of robbers to a bishop, whose unspotted integrity was allowed by all the world.

All that the bishop could do was to leave his testimony at the court of Rome; and he delivered three copies of a long sermon, one copy to the pope, the other two copies to two of the cardinals. In this discourse he sharply inveighed against the flagitious practices of the court of Rome, particularly the appropriation of churches to religious houses, the appeals of the religious to the pope, and the scandalous clause* in the bulls of NON OBSTANTE, which was the great engine of the pope's dispensing power. He observes, that the Son of God submitted to a most ignominious death for the redemption of human souls, which, without mercy, were delivered to wolves and bears. His uprightness and magnanimity were evidenced by this step, but no good effect appeared. To have explained and enforced the doctrines of the gospel itself, and to have proved the whole structure

* See an account of the effect of this clause near the bottom of page 65.

of the papacy to have been perfectly inconsistent with those doctrines, would have been a far more likely method of promoting the edification of the church; but to this task the light and knowledge of the bishop were unequal. He was for some time so dejected with the disappointment which he had met with, that he formed intentions of resigning his bishopric. But, recollecting what ravages of the church might be the consequence of such a step, he felt it his duty to remain in his office, and to do all the good, which the infelicity of the times would permit.

The bishop often preached to the people in the course of his perambulation through his diocese; and he required the neighbouring clergy to attend the sermons. He earnestly exhorted them to be laborious in administering to their flocks; and the lazy Italians, who, by virtue of the pope's letters had been intruded into opulent benefices, and who neither understood the language of the people, nor wished to instruct them, were the objects of his detestation. He would often with indignation cast the papal bulls out of his hands, and absolutely refuse to comply with them, saying he should be the friend of Satan, if he should commit the care of souls to foreigners. Innocent, however, persisting in his plan, peremptorily ordered him to admit an Italian, perfectly ignorant of the English language, to a very rich benefice in the diocese of Lincoln; and Grosseteste, refusing to obey, was suspended. Whether the sentence of suspension was formally repealed, or not, does not appear. Certain it is, that the bishop continued to exercise his episcopal function; and shortly we shall advert to facts, which prove in a still more striking manner, with what impunity he despised the papal mandates.

Observing that churches appropriated to religious houses had not always stated vicars, and that where vicarages existed, they were often meanly endowed, he obtained at length in 1250, a bull from Innocent to empower him to regulate these matters. The evil was indeed enormous; but the persevering zeal of the bi-

shop, supported by the extensive influence of his character, prevailed at length in some degree over the pope's usurpations; and a considerable number of vicarages in his diocese were at length regulated. A pious and upright perseverance in the reformation of abuses, amidst many vexatious disappointments, is seldom altogether in vain; and this wise and encouraging order of the divine government is extremely worthy of the attention of dignitaries of the church in all ages.

Grosseteste united the labours of his pen to those of the episcopal office. He began a comment on the psalter, though he lived not to finish the work; and he seems to have known no other recreation, than what naturally arose from the variety of his religious employments.

In January, 1253, Innocent was desirous of preferring his nephew, an Italian youth, in the cathedral of Lincoln; and for this purpose, he, by letter, directed the bishop of the diocese to give him the first canonry that should be vacant. This was to be done by PROVISION; for that was the decent term employed by the pontiff when he undertook to provide a successor to a benefice beforehand, under pretence of correcting the abuse of long vacancies. INNOCENT seems to have been determined in this instance to intimidate the bishop into submission. He declared, that any other disposal of the canonry should be null and void; and that he would excommunicate every one, who should dare to disobey his injunction. He wrote to two Italians, his agents in England, ordering them to insure and complete the appointment, with his usual clause of NON OBSTANTE; a clause pregnant with the most intolerable abuses; for it set aside all statutes and customs, and obliged them to give way to the present humour of the pope.

Grosseteste, resolute in his disobedience, wrote an EPISTLE on this occasion, which has made his name immortal. As he advanced in years, he saw more clearly the corruptions of the popedom, which, how-

ever, he still looked on as of divine authority. But if we set aside this remnant of the prejudices of education, he argues altogether on protestant principles. Some extracts of the epistle may deserve the reader's attention.* "I am not disobedient to the apostolical precepts. I am bound by the divine command to obey these. Our saviour Christ saith, whosoever is not with me, is against me. Our lord the pope appears to be his type and representative. It is impossible then that the sanctity of the apostolical see can be repugnant to the authority of Jesus Christ. The NON OBSTANTE clause overflows with uncertainty, fraud, and deceit, and strikes at the root of all confidence between man and man. Next to the sin of antichrist, which shall be in the latter time, nothing can be more contrary to the doctrine of Christ, than to destroy men's souls, by defrauding them of the benefit of the pastoral office. Those, who serve their own carnal desires by means of the milk and pool of the sheep of Christ, and do not minister the pastoral office to the salvation of the flock, are guilty of destroying souls. Two enormous evils are in this way committed. In one respect they sin directly against God himself, who is essentially good; in another against the image of God in man, which, by the reception of grace, is partaker of the divine nature. For the holy apostolical see to be accessory to so great wickedness, would be a horrible abuse of the fulness of power, an entire separation from the glorious kingdom of Christ, and a proximity to the two princes of darkness.† No man, faithful to the said see, can, with an unspotted conscience, obey such mandates, even if they were seconded by the high order of angels themselves; on the contrary, every faithful christian ought to oppose them with all his might. It is therefore in perfect consistence with my duty of obedience, that I withstand these enormities, so abominable to the lord Jesus Christ, so repugnant to the holiness of the apostolical see, and so

* See Fox, vol. i. page 365, and M. Paris, page 870.
† He seems to mean the devil and antichrist.

contrary to the unity of the catholic faith. I say then, this see cannot act but to edification; but your PROVISIONS are to destruction. The holy see neither can nor ought to attempt any such thing; for flesh and blood, and not the heavenly Father, hath revealed such doctrines."

It is not clear whether this epistle was written to the pope directly, or to some of his agents. It was meant, however, for his inspection; and it affords a marvellous instance of that christian boldness and honesty for which Grosseteste is so justly renowned. Sullied, indeed, were the qualities of this good man with much doctrinal imbecility, but ever animated by a true zeal for the honour of God, and by the deepest sense of the worth of souls.

Innocent, on receiving the positive denial, accompanied with such warm remonstrances, was incensed beyond measure: and "who, said he, is this old dotard, who dares to judge my actions? By Peter and Paul, if I were not restrained by my generosity, I would make him an example and a spectacle to all mankind. Is not the king of England my vassal, and my slave? and, if I gave the word, would he not throw him into prison, and load him with infamy and disgrace?" In so low a light did the bishop of Rome behold the monarch of this island! But king John had reduced his kingdom into a state of subjection to the pope; and the same vassalage continued all the days of his pusillanimous successor. The cardinals, however, who saw the danger which the pope incurred by his arrogance and temerity, endeavoured to moderate his resentment. Giles in particular, a Spanish cardinal, said,* "it is not expedient for you to proceed against the bishop in that violent manner. For what he saith is certainly true, nor can we with decency condemn him. He is an holy man, more so than we ourselves are; a man of excellent genius, and of the best morals; no prelate in christendom is

* Fox, vol. i. p. 366. Pegge, p. 248.

thought to excel him. By this time, it is possible, that the truths expressed in his epistle are divulged among many; and they will stir up numbers against us. The clergy both of France and England know the character of the man, nor is it possible to cast any stigma upon him. He is believed to be a great philosopher, an accomplished scholar in Latin and Greek literature, zealous in the administration of justice, a reader of theology in the schools, a popular preacher, a lover of chastity, and an enemy of simony." Others joined with Giles in the same sentiments. On the whole, the cardinals advised the pope to connive at these transactions, lest some tumult might arise in the church, for they said it was an evident truth, that a revolt from the church of Rome would one day take place in christendom. It seems there were even then some discerning spirits, who could foresee, that so unrighteous a domination would in time be brought to a close. Yet the prevalence of ambition and avarice induced them to support that domination, though they were convinced of its iniquity.

But the fury of Innocent was not to be allayed. He pronounced the sentence of excommunication against Grosseteste, and nominated Albert, one of his nuncios, to the bishopric of Lincoln. The bishop appealed to the tribunal of Christ, and paid no regard to the decree. What the cardinals foresaw, came to pass; the pope's commands were universally neglected; and the bishop continued in quiet possession of his dignity.

In the latter end of the summer of the same year, 1253, he was seized with a mortal disease at his palace of Buckden; and he sent for friar John de St. Giles, to converse with him on the state of the church. He blamed Giles and his brethren the dominicans, and also the franciscans, because, though their orders were founded in voluntary poverty, they did not rebuke the vices of the great. "I am convinced, said he, that both the pope, unless he amend his errors, and the friars, except they endeavour to restrain

him, will be deservedly exposed to everlasting death." We may hence collect what was the foundation of that respect which the bishop was wont to pay to the friars; it was the eclat of their voluntary poverty, which he hoped would have enabled them to be faithful dispensers of the word of God, as by it they seemed to be removed above the temptations of avarice. If a man of his understanding was deceived by their feigned sanctity, it ought to be less matter of surprise that the world at large was imposed on by the same cause; and that the institution of these orders proved so convenient a support to the popedom for several generations. The mind of Grosseteste was always more clear in discerning the END of true religion than it was in discovering the MEANS of promoting it. Upright, intrepid, disinterested, and constantly influenced by the fear of God, he yet failed to bring about the good which he had conceived in his heart, because he had too little acquaintance with "the mystery of godliness," and because he too much relied on moral and prudential plans for that reformation of mankind, which is sought in vain from every thing, except from the knowledge and application of the gospel.

But the bishop was rapidly advancing towards eternity; and he seems now to have had more powerful manifestations of divine truth from the Spirit of God than any with which he had hitherto been favoured. His zeal evidently arose from the purest charity. Superior to selfish considerations, he was absorbed in meditations concerning the church; and we have from a contemporary historian* an account of his last conversations with his chaplains, in which there was probably something still more evangelical than what they or the historian could understand. It is, however, our duty to report it as it is delivered to us; and clergymen at least will find it worthy their attention.

"In October, the bishop, oppressed with a fatal distemper, whatever it was, sent for some of his chap-

* Mat. Paris.

lains, and conversed with them. Christ, said he, with a sigh, came into the world to save souls: ought not he then, who takes pains to ruin souls, to be denominated antichrist? Our God built the universe in six days, but he laboured more than thirty years to restore man when fallen. Is not then the destroyer of souls, the antichrist and the enemy of God? The pope is not ashamed impudently to disannul, by his clauses of NON OBSTANTE, the decrees of the holy pontiffs his predecessors. Many other popes have afflicted the church; this INNOCENT has enslaved it more than they." He then recounts their usurious and fraudulent proceedings in England, and inveighs against the arts of amassing money practised by the friars on account of the crusades. I have seen, said he, an instrument, in which it was inserted, that those, who, in their wills, devised money for the use of the crusades, should receive indulgence in proportion to the sum they gave. He then exposed the scandalous practice of disposing of ecclesiastical benefices, and lamented that the friars, the devotees of poverty, were now converted into tax-gatherers to the pope, belying the habit they wore, while they were made more secular than ever. The bishop, indignant at these and other horrible proceedings, observed, " the church can never be delivered from this Egyptian bondage, but by the edge of the sword;" and while he was scarcely able to speak for sighs and tears, his breath and his voice failed him. He might be sharpened in his accusations by the personal ill treatment which he himself had received; but it must be owned, that he had a distinct knowledge of facts, and a most just abhorrence of hypocrisy and iniquity. And it is only to be lamented, that he had lived so long a time, and remained so little acquainted with the only christian armour of doctrine, which can cut down the powers of antichrist. He died at Buckden, October 9, 1253. INNOCENT heard of his death with pleasure; and said with exultation, " I rejoice, and let every true son of the Roman church rejoice with me, that my great enemy is removed." He or-

dered a letter to be written to king Henry, requiring him to take up the bishop's body, to cast it out of the church, and to burn it. The cardinals, however opposed the tyrant; and the letter was never sent, probably on account of the decline of Innocent's health; for he died the succeeding year.

M. Paris, though most superstitiously attached to the Roman see, and prejudiced against the bishop of Lincoln, on account of his severity towards the ancient monastic orders, was, however, a man of probity and honour; and has left such a testimony to the character of Grosseteste, as will deserve to be presented to the reader.*

"The holy bishop Robert departed this world which he never loved, and which was always to him as a place of banishment. He was the open reprover both of my lord the pope, and of the king, and the censurer of the prelates, the corrector of monks, the director of priests, the instructor of the clergy, the supporter of scholars, the preacher to the laity, the punisher of incontinence, the diligent investigator of various writings, and lastly he was the scourge of lazy and selfish Romans, whom he heartily despised. In the supply of the temporal table, liberal, copious, polite, cheerful and affable. In the spiritual table, devout, humble, and contrite. In the episcopal office, diligent, venerable, and indefatigable." The historian adds to this, "that even in those instances of discipline, in which he seemed to bear the hardest on the monks, he was allowed to have acted always with the purest intentions."

Grosseteste appears to have had no great turn for public business: he neglected it for the most part; nor did he frequent the court. The salvation of souls was perpetually in his thoughts and in his mouth; and it is devoutly to be wished, that many, whose evangelical light is far superior to his, resembled him in tenderness of conscience, in unwearied activity and zeal, and in genuine humility and modesty of spirit, with which,

* Mat. Paris, p. 876. Edit. Lond. 1640.

notwithstanding the disadvantage of a temper plainly irascible in a great degree, he was very eminently endowed.

In one of his letters he shows the idea which he had formed of the importance of the pastoral office.* "I dare not, for the love of God," says he, "confer the care of souls on any person, who will not sedulously discharge the office in person. The office itself is of the last importance; it requires a governor always RESIDENT, who applies himself to it, with vigilance, prudence, diligence, and fervour; who preaches the word of the Lord in season and out of season; who exhibits himself an example of good works; who, when he gives salutary admonition and is not regarded, can grieve and lament; who shakes his hands from holding bribes; who so evidently applies to pious uses the pecuniary fines, which he receives for the punishment of faults, that he is perfectly free from all suspicion of selfishness and avarice on that account; who is delighted, when he can with a good conscience acquit the accused; whom no prejudice, passion, intreaty, or gift, or partiality can divert from the path of rectitude; who delights in labour, and whose whole desire is to profit souls." He, who in an age of superstition, which afforded so many temptations to venality and corruption, could act according to the spirit of these rules, must have been possessed of the spirit of Christ, and have been superior to the spirit of the world.

To have so much enlarged on the character and transactions of a man, so little distinguished, in regard to evangelical knowledge, as bishop Grosseteste was, from the common herd of papists in his time, might seem to need an apology, were I not sensible, that the eminence of his PRACTICAL godliness demonstrates, that he must have been in possession of the fundamentals of divine truth; and, that the candid and intelligent reader may receive edification from a light

* Pegge

which burned with steadiness in the church of God, though in much obscurity.

The evidence, however, of the bishop's knowledge of fundamental truths is not only to be collected by fair inferences, but is also direct and positive. A number of his sermons in manuscript are still extant.* I have examined one of these throughout, which was preached from our Saviour's words in the sixth chapter of St. Luke, "Blessed are ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God." Let it suffice to condense the ideas contained in this sermon into a narrow compass, by a very short abridgment, which to the best of my power shall be faithful to the sentiments of the author, though I have not thought it worth while to translate accurately the barbarous Latin of the original.

He undertakes to describe the poverty recommended in the text, which, by comparison with another evangelist,† appears to be poverty in spirit. This poverty, he observes, is wrought in the heart of the elect by the holy Spirit. Its foundation, he tells us, is laid in real humility, which disposes a man to feel, that he has nothing, except what he has received from above. But this is not all; for humility in this view belonged to Adam before he fell. But the humility of a SINNER has a still deeper root. The humble man not only sees that he has nothing in himself, but he is also stripped of all desire to possess in himself the springs of selfexaltation. Condemned in himself, and corrupt before God, he despairs of help from his own powers, and in seeking he finds HIM, who is the true life, wisdom, and health, who is all in all, even the incarnate Son of God, who descended into our vale of sin and misery, that he might raise us from their depths. By leaning on HIM alone, every true christian rises into true life, and peace and joy. He lives in HIS life, he sees light in HIS light, he is invigorated with HIS warmth, and he grows in HIS strength, and leaning upon the Beloved, his soul as-

* They are preserved in the cathedral of St. Peter's at York.
† Matth. v.

cends upwards. The lower he sinks in humility, the higher he rises toward God. He is sensible that he not only is nothing in himself, but that he has also lost what he had gratuitously received, has precipitated himself into misery, and so subjected himself to the slavery of the devil; and lastly, that he has no internal resources for recovery. Thus he is induced to place his whole dependence on the Lord; and he is led to abhor himself, and always to prefer others, and "to take the lowest seat" as his own proper place. The humble soul is called on by our author solicitously to examine himself, whether he really demonstrates in his tempers and practice this grace of humility; and to beware lest, even if he do find some evidences of it in soul, he be inflated with the discovery, because he ought to know, that it is from the Lord alone that he is what he is; and that he ought no more to boast of himself than the shining colours in the glass should glory in that splendor, which they derive intirely from the solar rays. He observes, that the temptations to selfcomplacency are the effect of satanic injections; and that it behooves him, who would be found unfeignedly humble, to see whether he has the genuine marks of humility in practice; whether, for instance, he can bear to be rebuked by an inferior, whether he is not rendered insolent by honours, whether he is not inflated by praise, whether among equals he is the first to labour, and the last to exalt himself, whether he can render blessings for curses, and good for evil. By such methods of selfexamination he is to check the ebullitions of vain glory, with which the tempter is apt to inspire those, who seem to have made some proficiency in grace. If that proficiency be real, let them take care never to conceive of it as something separate from Christ: HE alone dwelling in them by his spirit produces all that is good, and to him alone the praise belongs.

To the directions and cautions concerning humility, which indeed form the most evangelical and most useful part of the sermon, the bishop adds some di-

rections concerning the contempt of the world, and the love of heavenly things. On the latter subject he quotes Augustin and Gregory, on the former he addresses his audience, as having already embraced voluntary poverty. Hence it appears, that the discourse was addressed to a company of ascetics; and it must be confessed, that he labours with great correctness to prevent them from presumptuously imagining themselves to be just and righteous. Throughout the discourse there is excellent matter, and it is well calculated to humble the proud; but there is very little to encourage the sincere. He seems to have no idea of the attainment of a state of solid peace and joy; nor is it to be wondered at. Like most of the very best divines, who wrote in those days, he knew not the just nature of the christian article of justification by Jesus Christ the righteous; and though he appears to have trusted in HIM for eternal salvation, and knew too well his own deficiences, to put any trust in himself, yet he evidently wanted the full assurance of understanding of the MYSTERY OF GODLINESS,* and could not, with his inefficacious religious views, HAVE ACCESS WITH CONFIDENCE by the faith of Jesus.†

* Colos. ii. 2. † Eph. iii. 12.

CENTURY XIV.

CHAP. I.

The General State of the Church in this Century.

THE same ignorance and superstition, the same vices and immoralities, which predominated in the last century, discoloured the appearance of the church in this. Real christians were still to be found either only among the waldenses, or else they worshipped God in obscurity under the unspeakable disadvantages of the general corruption. There arose, indeed, in this century various sectaries, besides the waldenses, who were cruelly persecuted both by popes and emperors, of whom, therefore, at first sight we are ready to conclude, that they must have been the real people of God. I cannot, however, find positive evidence, that any of them professed the real doctrines, or were influenced by the real spirit, of Jesus. Some of them were the disgrace of human nature, both in their principles and their practice; and I mean not to detail the narratives of fanaticisms, with which most ecclesiastical histories abound. The term lollard was affixed in general to all those, who professed, whether on solid principles of godliness or not, a greater degree of attention to acts of piety and devotion, than the rest of mankind. Of these Walter Raynard, a Dutchman, was apprehended and burnt at Cologne. This is he, whom I have already called Raynard Lollard in the account of the waldenses, and from whom the wickliffites are supposed to have acquired the name of lollards. I have carefully attended to Mosheim's account of the origin of the term,* and am convinced

* See Mosheim, vol. i. p. 744, 757.

from his reasonings, that lollard was a general name of reproach given to professors of piety, and not the proper name of any particular person. But it by no means thence follows, as Mosheim contends, that Walter Raynard always belonged to some sect of the romish communion. The accounts of the most eminent German authors constantly represent him as a protestant, and the common use of the term lollard in England, as applied to the followers of Wickliffe and of Walter Raynard, could scarcely have obtained, if the latter had continued a papist till his death.*

The church of God, therefore, considered as a society, seems only to have existed among the people, whose history has been related above.† Of other sects the detail would be as insipid, as it would be obscure and perplexed; and whoever has remarked the confusion of terms, which negligence, obloquy, or artifice, have introduced into the ecclesiastical accounts of sects and parties, will find little reason to acquiesce in the arrangements of their classes, which writers in different ages have made. Let us attend to facts rather than to terms. It is certain, that there were many societies of persons in this century called beghards, beguines, lollards, brethren of the free spirit, flagellants, &c. who suffered extremely from the iron hand of power. Among all these, the people called waldenses, and called also lollards, with what propriety is a question of little importance, seem perfectly distinguished, by their solid piety, sound scriptural judgment, and practical godliness; and therefore they may justly be accounted to have suffered for righteousness' sake; while the rest, as far as certainly appears, were the martyrs of folly, turbulence, or impiety.

In the east the profession of christianity still pervaded that contracted empire of the Greeks, of which Constantinople was the metropolis. But no christian records are come down to us of any thing like the pri-

* On the contrary, as it has been mentioned already, Walter Raynard, from a franciscan and an enemy, became a waldensian, preached the gospel, and suffered on that account at Cologne.

† Waldenses.

mitive gospel. Even the profession of christianity, which had existed in China, was extirpated through the jealousy of the reigning powers; and the famous Tamerlane the Tartar, cruelly persecuted all who bore the christian name, being persuaded, as a mahometan, that it was highly meritorious to destroy them. Thus even the form of godliness lost ground in Asia; the power of it, alas! had vanished long before. Nor were the attempts, which were made in Europe to renew the crusades, by means of indulgences, calculated to revive the light of the gospel in the east, even if they had succeeded. The holy land had been lost in 1291; and an army was collected in 1363, under the auspices of pope Urban V. commanded by John, king of France, that same monarch, who had been taken prisoner by Edward the black prince, at the battle of Poictiers. But John departed this life, and Urban's hopes from the crusade were blasted.

In the mean time the boundaries of christianity had been gradually extended in Europe.* Jagello, duke of Lithuania, was now almost the only pagan prince in that quarter of the world. And he, influenced by secular views, became a christian in name and profession, and by this means acquired the crown of Poland. The Teutonic knights continued also their military methods of obliging the Prussians and Livonians to profess the gospel, and completed in this century, what they had begun in the last.

The maxims and examples of the court of Rome were unspeakably prejudicial to the cause of godliness in this century. The practice of PROVISIONS, which had so much inflamed the zeal of bishop Grosseteste, was now reduced into a system by the popes who resided in France, and all Europe complained of their impositions. In England, in the beginning of the reign of Edward III. almost upon every vacancy the court of Rome pretended to fill the sees in this way.† Indeed its ambition and avarice were unbounded: it claimed a

* Mosheim, vol. i. p. 713. † Collier.

right to dispose of all offices in the church both great and small, and in that way amassed incredible sums. That same Boniface VIII., whom we left in the pontifical see at the close of the last century, filled the christian world with the noise and turbulence of his ambition. He followed the steps of Hildebrand, and attempted to be equally despotic in civil and ecclesiastical matters. He it was, who forbade the clergy to pay any thing to princes without his permission.* He also instituted a jubilee, which was to be renewed every hundred years, by which he granted plenary indulgences to all strangers, who should visit the churches of St. Peter and St. Paul in Rome.† This unprincipled pontiff died in extreme misery in 1303, in the ninth year of his papacy.

The schism which afterwards took place in the popedom was providentially a blessing to mankind. While, for the space of fifty years, the church had two or three heads at the same time; and, while each of the contending popes was anathematizing his competitors, the reverence of mankind for the popedom itself was insensibly diminished, and the labours of those, whom God raised up to propagate divine truth began to be more seriously regarded by men of conscience and probity.

In this century flourished the celebrated John Duns Scotus. Whether he was born in England, Scotland, or Ireland, has been disputed. That he was a famous schoolman is well known. But in the light of true religion I know nothing concerning him. The same thing may be said of Raymund Lully, William Ockham of Surrey, in England, and of Petrarch, that great reviver of polite literature in Italy. These were some of the most famous men in their age; but they helped not the church of God. Toward the close, however, of this period, (for the most part one of the most uninteresting in church history,) there arose in England

* Du Pin.

† The successors of Boniface finding, that the jubilee augmented the revenue of the Roman church, fixed its return to every twenty fifth year.

a luminary,* whose principles, conduct, and writings will require a distinct consideration, and whom I reserve to the third chapter. The same country furnishes us also with another extraordinary, though much obscurer character, I mean Bradwardine, archbishop of Canterbury, of whom an account will be given in the next chapter. In the remainder of this it will be worth while to add a few particular circumstances, which may show in what sort of an age Bradwardine lived.

The accounts of individuals, in this century, who truly feared God and wrought righteousness, are extremely rare. One person, I find on the continent, who seems not unworthy of a place in these memoirs, I mean Eleazar, count of Arian in Naples, born in 1295. At the age of twenty-three he succeeded to his father's estate. That this youth, in very affluent circumstances, and at a time of life when the passions are usually strong, could support a constant tenor of devotion and religious seriousness to his death, which took place about five years after, seems scarcely to have originated from principles lower than those of real christianity. The regulations of his household are very remarkable: some of which are as follows:

"I cannot allow any blasphemy in my house, nor any thing in word or deed which offends the laws of decorum.

Let the ladies spend the morning in reading and prayer, the afternoon at some work.

Dice and all games of hazard are prohibited.

Let all persons in my house divert themselves at proper times, but never in a sinful manner.

Let there be constant peace in my family; otherwise two armies are formed under my roof, and the master is devoured by them both.

If any difference arise, let not the sun go down upon your wrath.

We must bear with something, if we have to live

* Wickliffe.

among mankind. Such is our frailty, we are scarcely in tune with ourselves a whole day; and if a melancholy humour come on us, we know not well what we would have.

Not to bear and not to forgive, is diabolical; to love enemies, and to do good for evil, is the mark of the children of God.

Every evening all my family shall be assembled at a godly conference, in which they shall hear something of God and salvation. Let none be absent on pretence of attending to my affairs. I have no affairs so interesting to me as the salvation of my domestics.

I seriously forbid all injustice, which may cloke itself under colour of serving me."

"If I feel an impatience under affront, said he on one occasion, I look at Christ. Can any thing, which I suffer, be like to that which he endured for me?"

We are told that his conduct in life corresponded to these maxims. I could not prevail on myself to pass over in silence such a character as this, whom general history, full of the intrigues and ambitious enterprises of popes and princes, neither knows nor regards. God has his secret saints in the dullest seasons of the church, and Eleazar seems to have been one of these. But he was soon removed from this vale of sorrow; for he died in the twenty-eighth year of his age. His behaviour in his last sickness was of a piece with his life. The history of our Saviour's passion was read to him daily, and his mind was consoled by this means amidst the pains with which he was afflicted.*

But, whoever in these times had any serious impressions of religion, could scarcely meet with the least solid instruction. For the preaching of the word was so much disused, that it is remarked as a singular commendation of Thomas de la Mare, abbot of St. Alban's in the time of our king Edward III^d, that he preached in the priory of Tinmouth, where he pre-

* Butler, ix.

sided, before he was elected abbot of St. Alban's, and employed many secular clergy and mendicants to do the same, perceiving the function of preaching to be wholly omitted in monasteries,* little practised by the seculars, and engrossed by the mendicants. If "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," we may venture to affirm, that whenever christian preaching is disused or despised, whether through the influence of superstition or of refinement, then godliness is at a low ebb, and the principles of christianity are almost unknown. A pious Eleazar may in some measure supply the want to his own family; but what must be the state of knowledge in the world at large? The truths of the gospel are by no means obvious; they require study, attention, meditation; all the prejudices of our fallen nature oppose them when brought into full prospect: how dark then must be the minds of those, who never hear of them! The formalities of monasticism may give a false peace to the conscience, but they cannot enlighten the understanding, nor regulate the heart. Hence, amidst the most splendid appearances of religion, wickedness abounded, and a cumbersome mass of superstitions was a poor substitute for the love of God and man. In the abbey of St. Albans the superiors decked themselves with excess of pompous attire. They wore vestments as rich as art and money could make them; and though they changed their attire every day, they could not bring them all into use. Such was the state of things, during the presidency of Thomas de la Mare, an abbot, who was looked on as the mirror of piety.

Some attempts were, however, made in England to stem the torrent of ecclesiastical corruption. Even in the preceding century about the year 1265,† a national synod, held at London under Othobon, the pope's legate, undertook to reform the abuses, of which the whole nation loudly complained. This synod, in which Welch, Scotch, and Irish, clergymen

* Newcome's History of St. Albans. † Collier.

were present as well as English, was looked on as of great authority, and as a rule of ecclesiastical discipline to the church. Several of its canons are still in force, and make part of the canon law. The ninth canon provides against the evil of nonresidence, obliges the clergymen presented to a benefice, to resign his other preferments, and swear to reside. The twentieth provides against commutations for offences, and forbids the archdeacon ever to receive money on such accounts; for, " such practices," say the synod, " amount, in effect, to the grant of a license to sin." Severe, but just censure of the whole papal doctrine of indulgences! And how little room was there to hope, that this canon would be strictly observed in archdeaconries, or in any other limited district, while the supreme rulers of the church were breaking it continually!

In a council held at Lambeth in 1281,* a canon was enacted, which lays down rules of preaching concerning the fundamental articles of religion. It contains some wholesome truths, but mixed with much superstition. But the worst part of the canon is, that the parish priest was obliged to explain these fundamental articles only once a quarter. One is almost tempted to think, that the dignitaries of the church formerly prohibited some abuses, merely to save appearances, and were afraid, lest frequency of preaching might prove the means of a complete reformation. In this same council at Lambeth they allowed the BLOOD of Christ in the lesser churches, only to the priest, and the WINE which they granted to the laity, they said, was merely wine. It was expressly declared, that the whole body and blood of Christ was given at once under the species of bread; though sometimes a cup of wine was given to the people.† And thus the innovation of denying to the laity communion in both kinds was gradually introduced. This was one of the latest, and at the same time, one of the most shameless and absurd

*Collier. † Spelman. Concil. p. p. 329. Henry's Hist. book v.

corruptions of popery, destitute of every ground of argument, either from scripture or common sense; nor is it easy to conceive how it could ever have found its way into christendom. Was it, that those who invented it, intended to strengthen men's minds in the belief of transubstantiation, and also by sensible marks to impress on the imaginations of the people the superior dignity of the clergy? Be this as it may, we certainly find, that in the century, which we are at present reviewing, superstition has advanced some steps farther.

In the reign of Edward I. one of the wisest and most vigorous of our princes, it was natural for those who groaned under Romish oppressions, to expect some relief. But the pusillanimous conduct of his father Henry III. had, during a very long reign, enabled the popes to enslave the nation completely, and unless the successor had himself felt the spirit of godliness, of which there are no evidences, it was not to be expected, that he would exert himself for the good of the church. Edward indeed was very great in the arts both of war and of peace; but in ecclesiastical matters he did little for his country. He paid, though with reluctance, the tribute imposed on king John, which had been remitted to Rome all the days of Henry III. He would not, however, allow it to be called a tribute; and he constantly maintained that he was not a vassal of the Roman see. His weak son and successor Edward II. cannot be supposed to have been capable of relieving the nation; but under Edward III. something was done to restrain the encroachments of the popedom. This great prince resolutely refused to pay the annual stipend to Rome, and procured a parliamentary declaration, that king John had no right to reduce the English realm to a state of vassalage. By the statute of provisors he secured the rights of patrons and electors of livings against the claims of the papal see, and outlawed those who should dare to appeal to Rome.

On the continent also the papal tyranny met with

some opposition. The emperor Lewis was excommunicated by pope Clement VI. because he had dared to exercise the imperial authority, which had been conferred on him by the electors, without waiting for the confirmation of the pope: and so prevalent was the reign of superstition, that Lewis was obliged to renounce the imperial dignity. There were not wanting, however, some learned men, who protested against these papal usurpations, and particularly Marsilius of Padua, who published a defence of the emperor's authority against the encroachments of the pope, and maintained some protestant positions, not only in regard to ecclesiastical government, but also in support of that which is infinitely more important, the pure doctrine of the gospel. In substance he appears to have held * that leading article of christianity, justification before God, only for the merits of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works or deservings; and he affirmed, that good works are not the efficient cause of our acceptance with God, but that on the contrary, they are the fruits of faith and follow after justification, which, in effect never exists, for any length of time, without them. Distinctions, nice indeed, and in the eyes of superficial thinkers in religion always apparently frivolous, though they are inseparably connected with the true relief of burdened consciences, and though they directly tend not only to undermine the whole system of papal fallacy, but also to promote true holiness of heart and life. But of this same Marsilius, who saw so clearly an essential branch of evangelical truth, I rather conjecture than affirm, that he had the spirit of a wise and holy reformer.

About the same time, that is, about the middle of this century, Conrade Hager, in the city of Herbipoli,† taught, for the space of twenty-four years together, that the mass was not properly a sacrifice for sin; and of consequence was of no avail either to the living or

* Fox, Acts and Monum. vol. i. p. 443. † Fox, Id. p. 445.

to the dead for their acceptance with God; and therefore that the money bestowed on the priests for masses in behalf of the deceased, was pregnant with superstitious abominations. It is probable, that he taught also good doctrine, as well as opposed that which was evil. The man was condemned as an heretic, and imprisoned; but history is silent concerning the issue of his afflictions.

In general, however, the great defect of those, who withstood the reigning corruptions in these times, was this; they distinctly complained of the fashionable abominations, but were very scanty in describing the real evangelical doctrines, which alone can relieve and sanctify the souls of men. This remark is but too applicable to the very best of the reformers, who appeared in Europe from this time till the era of the REFORMATION. That was a work, which well deserved its name, because it builded up as well as pulled down, and presented the church with a new fabric, as well as demolished the old. It was a work, in which the characters of a divine influence appeared far more completely than in any of the former attempts against popery; and therefore its effects were lasting. They remain to this day.

But THE DAY OF SMALL THINGS IS NOT TO BE DESPISED.*

In this century, and probably towards the close of it, the Ploughman's Complaint appeared in England, a tract, which, with much zeal and energy, described the reigning abuses, and which, probably, was not without effect.

Richard Fizraf† was one of the most eminent confessors in this age. He was brought up at Oxford, and promoted by Edward III. to the archbishopric of Armagh in Ireland. He distinguished himself by opposing the pretensions of the mendicant orders; who, armed with papal authority, encroached on the rights of the secular clergy, and prevented them from the

* Zech. iv † Fox, p. 464, &c.

exercise of godly discipline. "I have," said he, "in my diocese of Armagh, about two thousand persons, who stand condemned by the censures of the church, denounced every year against murderers, thieves, and such like malefactors, of all which number scarcely fourteen have applied to me or my clergy, for absolution. Yet they all receive the sacraments, as others do, because they are absolved, or pretend to be absolved, by friars."

Nor was this the only point in which Fizraf opposed the mendicants. He withstood their practice of begging; and maintained, that it is every man's duty to support himself by honest labour; that it forms no part of christian wisdom and holiness for men to profess themselves mendicants; that to subsist by begging ought to be matter of necessity, never of choice; that the Son of God, as he never taught such doctrine, so he never practised it in his own person; and that, though he was always poor when on earth, he never was a beggar. This was to strike at the root of the pretended sanctity of the friars, who were enraged to find the very practice, in which they gloried as matter of extraordinary virtue, represented as in its own nature unlawful. Fizraf was therefore cited by the friars to appear before pope Innocent VI. and to give an account of the doctrine, which he had broached and maintained both in the pulpit and in conversation. The archbishop obeyed; and, in the presence of the pope, defended at large the rights of parochial ministers against the intrusions of the mendicants, and exposed the various enormities of the latter. What effect his defence had on the mind of the pope, does not distinctly appear. It is certain, however, that this confessor was persecuted both by civil and ecclesiastical powers, and underwent a variety of hardships. In a certain confession or prayer which our martyrologist* saw, and intended, as he tells us, to publish, Fizraf describes the history of his own life, and, particularly declares how the Lord had instructed him,

* Fox.

and brought him out of the vanities of aristotelian subtilty to the study of the scriptures. The beginning of the prayer in Latin is given us by Fox, and it will deserve to be translated: "To thee be praise, glory and thanksgiving, O Jesus most holy, most powerful, most amiable, who hast said, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life;' a way without aberration, truth without a cloud, and a life without end. For thou hast shown to me the way; thou hast taught me the truth; and thou hast promised me life. Thou wast my way in exile, thou wast my truth in counsel, and thou wilt be my life in reward."

This holy person was seven or eight years in banishment, and died in that situation, having defended his tenets by words and by writings to his death. Of his refutation of the reigning abuses the account is large, but to us at least at this day tedious and unnecessary; of his christian spirit, doctrine, and sufferings, the account is very brief, but I think sufficient to show, that GOD WAS WITH HIM.

About the year 1372, pope Gregory XI. despatched a bull to the archbishop of Prague, in which he commanded him to excommunicate Militzius, a Bohemian. This man had belonged to some religious order at Prague, and having forsaken it, had given himself to preaching, and had certain congregations following him. Among these were several harlots, who, being converted from their wickedness, now led a godly life. Militzius was wont to say of them, that in religious attainments they were superior to all the nuns in christendom. Another of his assertions, which provoked the indignation of pope Gregory, was, that antichrist was already come. In his writings he declared, that he was moved by the holy Spirit, to search out by the scriptures, concerning the coming of antichrist. Little more is recorded concerning this confessor, than that he was at length silenced and imprisoned by the archbishop of Prague.

There were others who opposed the corruptions of the times; but the account is too obscure and scanty

to be interesting. And he, who loves to see the practical power of divine truth, would wish, not only that opposition should be made to antichrist, but much more that the positive marks of christian godliness should be manifest. Both in private and in public life there were, doubtless, some sincere servants of God and his Christ; and I wish I could gratify the mind of the pious reader with an instructive relation of them. But of such men history is almost silent. APPARENT RARI NANTES IN GURGITE VASTO. However, in the dearth of faithful and intelligent christians, a brief review of the character and writings of Thomas Bradwardine will not only afford gratification, but excite surprise. He appears to have been an extraordinary man; and he has left behind him unequivocal marks of real holiness.

CHAP. II.

Thomas Bradwardine.

THIS learned and pious person is supposed to have been born about the middle of the reign of king Edward I. He was of Merton College Oxford, and was one of the proctors of that university in 1325. He excelled in mathematical knowledge, and was in general distinguished for his accurate and solid investigations in divinity. There was a depth in his researches, which entitled him to the name of "the PROFOUND."* He seems to have been so devoted to a recluse and sedentary life, that very little has come down to us concerning his conduct and transactions. He was confessor to king Edward III. and attended that monarch in his French wars. It is observed that he often preached before the army. On occasion of a vacancy in the see of Canterbury, the monks of that city chose him archbishop; but Edward, who was

* Bradwardine's Life prefixed to his works.

fond of his company, refused to part with him. Another vacancy happening soon after, the monks elected him a second time, and Edward yielded to their desires. The modesty and innocence of his manners, and his unquestionable piety and integrity, seem to have been the principal causes of his advancement. He was, however, by no means adapted to a court; and soon found himself out of his element. His personal manners and deportment were the object of derision to the courtiers; and when he was consecrated at Avignon, Cardinal Hugh, a nephew of the pope, ridiculed the prelate by introducing into the hall a person habited as a peasant riding on an ass, petitioning the pope to make him archbishop of Canterbury.* This was one of "the spurns, which patient merit of the unworthy takes." But the jest was found not to answer the ungenerous views of him who made it. It appeared to the assembly, that solid learning and understanding, though destitute of exterior accomplishments, when clothed with piety and humility, as in Bradwardine's case, were by no means proper subjects of ridicule and contempt. The pope and his cardinals resented the indignity, and frowned on the insolent contriver.

Bradwardine was consecrated in 1349, in the twenty-third year of Edward III., but not many weeks after his consecration, and only seven days after his return into England, he died at Lambeth. His departure out of life seems to have been a providential mercy to himself. For we may well doubt whether his elevation would have increased either his comfort or his reputation. He, who, before his promotion, was judged of all men the most worthy to preside in the church, would in all probability, partly on account of the habits of a studious life, and partly on account of the complexion of the times, have soon been deemed unequal to the office. In the early periods of the church he might have shone with distinguished lustre; but a

* Henry's Hist. of England, fourteenth century.

pious archbishop of simple manners could have done little service to the church in that age.

His great work was "concerning the cause of God against Pelagius." An admirable performance! whether one considers the force of his genius, the solidity of his reasoning powers, or the energy of his devotion. In reviewing it, it gave me great satisfaction to observe, that the Spirit of God had not forsaken the church; but, on the contrary, in one of the darkest periods had raised up a defender of divine truth, who might have done honour to the brightest. Abstracted from the spirit of the times in which he lived, Bradwardine gave himself up to the investigation of real gospel truth; and he published to the world, in a large volume, the fruit of his researches. Some few extracts may give the reader a just idea of his doctrine and spirit; and may also throw some light on the state of religion in the age in which he lived.

In the preface he lays open his heart, and explains the exercises of his mind on the great subject of divine grace, which he attempts to defend against the supporters of the doctrine of freewill; a term, which I have repeatedly observed to be improper; and which, as used by him and by most, if not all, of the fathers, who really loved evangelical truth, means much the same, as selfsufficiency. Bradwardine had observed how very few in his days appeared to be conscious of their need of the holy Spirit to renew their natures; and, being himself deeply sensible of the * desperate wickedness of the human heart, and of the preciousness of the grace of Christ, he seems to have overlooked or little regarded the fashionable superstitions of his time, and to have applied the whole vigor and vehemence of his spirit to the defence of the foundations of the gospel. But let us hear him speak for himself.

"As I am somewhat encouraged by the countenance of those who love the cause of God, so I own

* Jerem. xvii. 9.

I am discouraged by the opposition of those who embrace the cause of Pelagius, who are, alas! far more numerous. For behold, I speak it with real grief of heart, as formerly 850 prophets, with the addition of numbers of the populace without end, were united against one prophet of the Lord, so at this day, how many, O Lord, contend for freewill against thy gratuitous graces, and against St. Paul the spiritual champion of grace! How many indeed in our times despise thy saving grace; and maintain, that freewill suffices for salvation! or if they use the term grace, how do they boast, that they deserve it by the strength of freewill; so that grace in their eyes appears to be sold at a price, and not freely conferred from above! How many, presuming on the power of their own freewill, refuse thy influence in their operations, saying with the ungodly, depart from us! How many, extolling the liberty of their own will, refuse thy service; or, if with their lips they own that thou cooperatest with them, how do they, like the proud, disobedient, angels of old, who hated thee, refuse that thou shouldst reign over them! Nay, prouder than Satan, and not content to esteem themselves thy equals, they most arrogantly boast, that they reign above thee, the King of kings. For they fear not to maintain, that their own will in common actions goes before as the mistress, that thine follows as a handmaid; that they go before as lords, that thou followest as a servant; that they as kings command, and that thou as a subject obeyest. How many support pelagianism with clamour, raillery, and derision! Almost the whole world is gone after Pelagius into error. Arise, O Lord, judge thy own cause: sustain him who undertakes to defend thy truth; protect, strengthen, and comfort me. For thou knowest, that, no where relying on my own strength, but trusting in thine, I, a weak worm, attempt to maintain so great a cause."

From the vehemence of his complaints it appears, that together with the triumphant progress of superstition, the christian world had made rapid advances

in selfsufficiency. The scholastic learning, which was ardently cultivated, had enlisted itself on the side of pelagianism, or at least of semipelagianism. Those, who were not hardy enough to maintain the merit of condignity, yet strenuously held the merit of congruity, which was indeed the favourite theme of the fashionable divines. By its assistance they arrogated to themselves the merit of doing certain good actions, which would render it meet and equitable, that God should confer saving grace on their hearts.* This is that grace of congruity, which the church of England condemns in her 13th article; and it was, among others, only one of those methods, by which the natural pride of a heart unacquainted with its own total apostacy endeavours to support its dignity, and to prevent an ingenuous confession of helplessness and of complete unworthiness. History shows this sentiment to be perfectly semipelagian. "Inward preventing grace, say that sect, is not necessary to form in the soul the first beginnings of true repentance and amendment; every one is capable of producing these by the mere power of his natural faculties, as also of exercising faith in Christ, and of forming the purposes of a holy, and sincere obedience," but they acknowledge also, that "none can persevere or advance in that holy and virtuous course, without the perpetual support and the powerful assistance of grace."†

Something like this, seems to be the religion natural to man as a fallen creature, when he "leans to his own understanding," and derives not his creed from divine revelation; and when at the same time he is not advanced by a more uncommon degree of hardihood into the pride of perfect pelagianism. On this plan, Bradwardine thinks, that God is made the servant, man the master; and it is remarkable, that a poet of

* Condignity implies merit; and of course, claims reward on the score of justice. Congruity pretends only to a sort of imperfect qualification for the gift and reception of God's grace.

† Mosheim, vol. i. p. 277.

our own, who seems to have embraced this scheme, admits the same thought when he says,

> Heaven but persuades, almighty man decrees;
> Man is the maker of immortal fates.*

I am sensible, how much has been said, and may be said with great plausibility in support of the poet's doctrine. But it is perfectly foreign to the design of this history, to enter into so boundless a field of controversy. Suffice it once more to refer the reader to Edward's treatise on the freedom of the will, for a full and complete confutation of the scheme. I shall only add, that all truly humble souls, whose consciences have felt the force of christian doctrine, are assuredly persuaded that their salvation is altogether of grace from first to last, by the certain testimony not only of scripture, but also of their own experience, though they may never have formally discussed the controversy before us. Such a soul, if I mistake not, was that of Bradwardine; and as he was conscious of the pernicious tendency of SELFSUFFICIENCY, he writes from a heart inflamed with zeal for the divine glory, and labouring with charitable concern for the souls of men.

Bradwardine goes on in his preface to inform us, how he had prayed, and with what strength and consolation he had been favoured. His spirit appears to have been under the steady influence of humility and piety, while he was reflecting on the subject. After having described the opposition made to divine grace from age to age, he thus concludes: "I know, O Lord God, that thou dost not despise nor forsake those who love thee, but thou dost sustain, teach, cherish, strengthen, and confirm them. Relying on this thy goodness and truth, I undertake to war under thy invincible banners."

The treatise itself is worthy of him who was called the PROFOUND. The author appears to have been endowed with a strong argumentative mind; but the work is too metaphysical for the perusal of ordinary

* Young's Night Thoughts, Night 7.

readers, nor would it answer any valuable purpose to present the reader with a regular abridgment of its contents. The mode of writing in that age was tedious and prolix beyond measure; and it must be ascribed to the infection of the scholastic turn of those times, that Bradwardine wrote against the errors of the schoolmen in their own style and manner. He possessed not the useful qualification of writing in a plain scriptural manner, and of making use of arguments equally capable of impressing all ranks of men. The popular talent of perspicuously displaying divine truths, and of happily illustrating them by proofs drawn from scripture and experience, was at that time hardly known in christendom.

Some concise observations however, and a selection of a few remarkable passages, may give the reader an idea of the nature of the work.

He undertakes to lay before mourning penitents the consolations of the gospel; and particularly, to animate and cheer the hearts of those who are ready to despair on account of the greatness of their transgressions.* He tells us, that some Jews once declared to him, that those, who had sinned four times repeatedly, were entirely excluded from all possibility of pardon, grounding their notion on the expression several times repeated in the first chapter of Amos, "for three transgressions, and for four." Against this mean conceit, worthy of a rabbinical taste, he shows the immensity of the divine perfections of goodness and mercy, and represents them as far surpassing the limited evils of man, provided the sinner repent and humbly come to God.

"Josephus† tells us, says he, that the sadducees thought it a glorious thing to contend against the renowned doctors of their nation in philosophical points: thus, at this day I fear very many seek glory by overturning or seeming to overturn the constructions and interpretations of others. They, who have not a sin-

* Book i. p. 20. † P. 145.

gle house or cottage* of their own erection, are peculiarly infected with the love of glory; they are indeed the bolder in dismantling the buildings of others, because they are in no fear of retaliation, as they have nothing of their own to lose." So exactly similar have sceptics been in all ages! for example, the sadducees in the time of Josephus, the pelagians in the time of Bradwardine, and those who at this day arrogate to themselves exclusively the credit of being RATIONAL in religion. Dubious and hesitating in regard to their own systems, vehement and decisive against the systems of others, they even glory that they have not yet completed their own creed, while they condemn as bigots all who profess to have determinate articles of faith, as if the perfection of wisdom lay in reasoning against every thing, and in determining nothing; or as if the scripture was not a form of sound words, which we ought to hold fast without wavering, so far as it reveals to us the doctrines of God and the path of duty. Bradwardine observing, that a disputatious and sceptical spirit resulted from the pride of the heart, prays earnestly for a heaven taught simplicity of mind; and while he takes notice, that God despises the proud, he thankfully owns that he visits, illuminates, and rejoices with the simple.

He maintains the doctrine of a universal, decisive, providence; and justly exposes the absurdity of the common language of mankind concerning fortune.† He observes how often it is said in scripture, that the Lord will put his fear into the hearts of the enemies of his people, will fight for his church, will go before them, &c. He asserts, that God meant to show by these declarations,‡ that this is his general plan of government, which is always carried on by HIS energy, though that energy may be often invisible, or not accompanied with sensible miracles; that the promises

* This metaphorical language is used by Bradwardine against the boasting critics of his own day, to denote their poverty of invention in religious subjects.

† Page 267. ‡ Page 277.

of divine support are specially applicable to spiritual conflicts; as, in them more particularly, the Lord means to teach the impotent and the miserable where they should place their hope, and seek for strength, victory, and salvation. "Let him, says he, who likes not these things, hope in princes, trust in man, make flesh his arm, and in his heart depart from the Lord; let him trust in his bow, let him fancy that his sword will save him; and if he be successful, let him not return thanks nor bless the Lord in hymns of grateful acknowledgment, because he owes, forsooth, no obligation to him: and I no way doubt, but though he call himself a christian; he will pay less regard to the true God, than a pagan does to an idol, to whom he offers sacrifice. But, let others hope as they please, it is good for me, in every conflict, to hold fast by God."

He makes an excellent practical use of his doctrine of providence.* "He, who excludes from his creed the view of divine providence, disposing of all events, not permissively, but actually, removes, so far as in him lies, from every troubled person the greatest encouragements to patience, hope, consolation and joy. Who will serenely bear adversity, if he believe it to proceed from chance, or ultimately from an enemy; and if he do not know, that it really proceeds from, and is guided by, the unerring direction of the allwise God, who, by this means, though invisible to human sight, purges sins, exercises virtues, and accumulates rewards? He, doubtless, who does thus believe in divine providence, has every advantage for patience and composure of mind, because he knows that all things work together for his good. Thus rough places are made smooth to all the saints of God, hard things are softened, the edge of suffering is blunted, and bitter things are tempered sweetly: And thus a singular solace, a principle and a never failing refreshment, in all adversities, is provided for me, a sinful worm. With

* Page 288.

what patience may all disagreeable events be endured by the man, who fears and loves God; and who firmly believes, that the great and wise Being, who can require nothing but what is wise and good, actually requires him to bear such things! This, I think, is to make the Lord's yoke easy, and his burden light."

I find* that he agrees with the account, which has been given, concerning the author of the latter to Demetrius.† For he shows, that Augustin, in his first book against Pelagius and Celestius, asserts that letter to be the work of Pelagius, quoting and arguing against a part of it in the plainest terms, and that nothing can be a more groundless surmise than to ascribe the epistle in question to Jerom. He also goes over the same ground which Augustin had gone over before him in confuting pelagianism.

He largely refutes the error, more famous than any other in his day, namely, that men, by their works, deserve grace of congruity.‡ "By this it is, says he, that men rush headlong into pelagianism. Not content with gratuitous grace, men would have grace to be sold by God, though at a very cheap rate." He proves, that men are naturally destitute of the least spark of genuine love of God, without which it seems impossible that they should have any claim upon him in any sense whatever. He also§ disapproves the error of those, who contend, that grace is conferred on account of future merits foreseen.

He observes,‖ that Robert, bishop of Lincoln, in his questions on the will of God, and in his other works, seems to favour pelagianism, when he teaches, that the supreme Being does never antecedently determine the free acts of the will, but that the will, in its own nature, possesses a selfdetermining power; and that the event may always be either compliance or noncompliance with those gracious influences by which God excites the mind to virtue.

* Page 312. † Vol. ii. page 431. ‡ Page 325. § Page 363.
‖ Page 602. lib. ii.

The following is an extract of Bradwardine's devout meditations on the subjects discussed in the treatise.

" O great and wonderful Lord, our God, thou only light of the eyes! Open, I implore thee, the eyes of my heart, and of others my fellow creatures, that we may truly understand and contemplate thy wondrous works! And the more thoroughly we comprehend them, the more may our minds be affected, in the contemplation, with pious reverence and profound devotion. Who is not struck with awe in beholding thy allpowerful WILL, completely efficacious throughout every part of the creation? It is by this same sovereign and irresistible WILL, that whom, and when thou pleasest, thou bringest low and liftest up, killest and makest alive. How intense and how unbounded is thy love to me, O Lord! Whereas, my love, how feeble and remiss! My gratitude, how cold and inconstant! Far be it from thee, that thy love should ever resemble mine; for in every kind of excellence thou art consummate. O thou, who fillest heaven and earth, why fillest thou not this narrow heart? O human soul, low, abject, and miserable, whoever thou art, if thou be not fully replenished with the love of so great a good, why dost thou not open all thy doors, expand all thy folds, extend all thy capacity, that, by the sweetness of love so great, thou mayest be wholly occupied, satiated, and ravished; especially, since, little as thou art, thou canst not be satisfied with the love of any good inferior to the ONE SUPREME? Speak the word, that thou mayest become my God and most amiable in mine eyes, and it shall instantly be so, without the possibility of failure. What can be more efficacious to engage the affections, than preventing love? Most gracious Lord, by thy love thou hast prevented me, wretch that I am, who had no love for thee, but was at enmity with my Maker and Redeemer. I see, Lord, that it is easy to say and to write these things, but very difficult to execute them. Do thou, therefore, to whom nothing is difficult, grant, that I

may more easily practise these things with my heart, than utter them with my lips. Open thy liberal hand, that nothing may be easier, sweeter, or more delightful to me, than to be employed in these things. Thou, who preventest thy servants with thy gracious love, whom dost not thou elevate with the hope of finding thee? And, what canst thou deny to him, who loves thee, who is in need, and who supplicates thy aid? Permit me, I pray, to reason with thy magnificent goodness, that my hopes may be enlarged. It is not the manner, even of human friendship, to reject a needy friend, especially when the ability to relieve is abundant.

"Why do we fear to preach the doctrine of the predestination of saints, and of the genuine grace of God? Is there any cause to dread, lest man should be induced to despair of his condition, when his hope is demonstrated to be founded on God alone? Is there not much stronger reason for him to despair, if, in pride and unbelief, he founds his hope of salvation on himself."

Such were the ardent breathings of soul in a studious and thoughtful scholar of the fourteenth century; who, unaided by human connexions, in an age dreary and unpromising throughout Europe and in our own island full of darkness, seems to have lived the life of faith on the Son of God. The light of the waldensian doctrine had been all along confined to the continent. But HE, who shows mercy, because he will show mercy, and who had, in some measure, paved the way to the more copious exhibition of his grace by the life and writings of Bradwardine, was preparing, not long after his decease, to revive the light of divine truth in England, and there to form a people for himself, who should set forth his praise.

CHAP. III.

John Wickliff.

THIS renowned reformer was first heard of at Merton college in Oxford, one of the most famous seminaries of learning in that age. Even Walden, his enemy, owns, that he was astonished at the strength of the argumentation, and the copiousness of the authorities, which he adduced to support his opinions. The latter end of the fourteenth century was, indeed, so overloaded with absurdities, that it was no very difficult matter, for a person of far less learning and ability than Wickliff, to confound the supporters of the hierarchy in reasoning.

He began to flourish about the year 1371, while Edward III. still reigned in England.* He preached on Sundays against the vices of the friars, and the prevailing abuses in religion, particularly against the real presence in the eucharist. In this point Wickliff has been considered as remarkably clear. Let the reader judge for himself, from the reformer's own expressions in a treatise, which among other things, contains also his accusations of the mendicants.† A short view of that treatise shall be given hereafter. We are informed, indeed, that he preached against purgatory.‡ But I much question the truth of this assertion, because, from his own writings, he by no means appears to have been clearly decided against that abomination of popery.

His labours on the other days in the week corresponded to those on the Lord's day. The schools were then in high repute.§ Aristotelian logic was at its

* Fox, vol. i. p. 484. Fuller's Church Hist. b. iv. p. 130.

† This was printed from two old manuscripts, one in Benet's college, Cambridge, the other in the public library at Oxford.

‡ Fuller.

§ The scholastic divinity pretended to discuss and settle all questions in theology in a rational and argumentative manner. Like Plato's school, it

height; and Wickliff made use of the same weapons to oppose error, which his adversaries employed to maintain it.

He was removed from his office of prior or warden of Canterbury college, in Oxford, with circumstances of great injustice, about the year 1367. The pope, in the year 1370, confirmed the sentence of his removal, which was not, indeed, to be wondered at, because the dignity and interest of the monastic orders were intimately connected with the question of Wickliff's right to hold his office. But it will be needless, on this head, to trouble the reader with an account of particulars. A judicious and circumstantial writer, whom have frequently consulted in these memoirs, apprehends, that Wickliff was probably heated against both the pope and the monks* by a resentful sense of the ill treatment he had met with on this occasion. And it is, no doubt, true, that where men are wholly devoid of divine grace, personal injuries not only sink deep into the mind, but frequently also are apt to predominate without control throughout all the conduct.

has had several ages or periods: The ANCIENT, the MIDDLE and the NEW.

The ancient began under Lanfranc, archbishop of Canterbury, or rather under Abelard, and his disciple Peter Lombard, called the master of the sentences, on account of his work of sentences, which appeared in 1172: it preserved its credit nearly one hundred years.

The middle may be reckoned to commence early in the thirteenth century, under Albertus Magnus, a learned dominican, who published twenty-one volumes in folio at Lyons. These contain chiefly long commentaries on Aristotle; and though they treat every thing in a logical way, are of little real use, but to fill large libraries. The famous Thomas Aquinas was the disciple of Albertus, and read lectures on the book of sentences. During this period the peripatetic philosophy was raised to its utmost reputation. The works of Aquinas have gone through several editions, in seventeen volumes, folio. The author died in 1274.

The new, or third, age of school divinity begins with Durandus de St Pourcain, who wrote commentaries on the four books of sentences, combatted the opinions of Thomas Aquinas, and is said to have displayed great wit and genius. Indeed after the time of Aquinas the scholastic disputes grew more and more subtile, and the whole attention of the disputants were employed on the most frivolous questions. They often contended with great heat about mere formalities, and even raised phantoms in their imaginations for the purpose of continuing disputes, and opposition of sentiment. Durandus died bishop of Meaux in 1333. School divinity is now fallen into the lowest contempt.

* Collier, p. 582.

But there want not evidences, that, in Wickliff, a better spirit was the ground of his opposition to the fashionable abuses. He protested openly in the schools,* that his principal design was to recover the church from idolatry, especially in regard to the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ. Hence he raised against himself a storm of persecution; and was, about the year 1377, cited to appear before Sudbury archbishop of Canterbury, and Courtney bishop of London, on a day fixed at St. Paul's. Wickliff obeyed the citation, and went accompanied by John of Gaunt, duke of Lancaster, and Henry Percy, lord marshal of England. The former of these noblemen was the son of king Edward III. and at that time, his father's faculties being much impaired, the most powerful personage in England. He was a very spirited patron of Wickliff, and had conceived a great dislike against the prelates. His conduct and that of lord Percy in the council added no real honour to the cause of Wickliff. They treated the bishop of London in so insolent a manner, that the court broke up in confusion; and it would have given real pleasure to a lover of christian reformation, if he could have discovered any proof, that Wickliff had protested against the disorderly conduct of his patrons; but this does not appear. It is no more than historical justice to say, that the behaviour of the archbishop and of the bishop seems to have been more unexceptionable than that of Wickliff or of his friends, in this transaction. The opinions, for which Wickliff was censured, were, as they are stated by Walsingham, a writer, who strongly supports the cause of popery,† "that the church of Rome was not the head of other churches, that St. Peter was not superior to the other apostles, and that the pope, in the power of the keys, was only equal to a common priest." These were undoubtedly the sentiments of genuine protestantism. What he further asserted, namely, that temporal lords and patrons had

* Fox, 1 vol. 485. † Collier, p. 564.

a right to disseise the church of her endowments, in case of misbehaviour, was a sentiment at least expressed in too indefinite a manner; but, that John of Gaunt should eagerly support it, is what might be expected from his turbulent and violent character.

Wickliff, having escaped the persecution of the hierarchy, in the manner that has been mentioned, continued to preach to the people, during the minority of king Richard II. who was crowned in the year 1377. In the mean time, certain articles, (in substance, those, which have been laid before the reader)* were collected against him: and Sudbury, the archbishop of Canterbury, enjoined the reformer to be silent, and no more to handle such topics. The patronage, however, of the duke of Lancaster, for a time was stronger than the ecclesiastical inhibitions; till repeated mandates from the pope emboldened the bishops a second time to cite the innovator before them at Lambeth; and he was again protected by the civil power, though he was obliged to explain and qualify the meaning of some of his positions. Whether he acted in this matter with the simplicity and integrity of a christian, the reader must judge for himself from the few instances which follow.

One of his conclusions, as they were called, exhibited in the convocation of the bishops held at Lambeth, was this: "All the race of mankind here on earth, except Christ, have no power simply to ordain, that St. Peter and his successors should politically rule over the church for ever." His explanation before the assembly was to this effect: "This conclusion is self-evident; inasmuch as it is not in man's power to stop the coming of Christ to judge the quick and the dead." It seems natural to infer from the conclusion itself, that Wickliff meant to assert the right of mankind to subvert the political authority of the pope. A bold assertion! but, at the same time, an inestimable truth, because the papal power was founded in usurpation.

* Fox, p. 491.

But the explanation of the conclusion renders it equivocal, if not altogether nugatory.

Again: " There is no example of Christ, which giveth power to his disciples to excommunicate any subject, especially for denying clerical claims of temporalities; but the contrary." This is a part of Wickliff's doctrine, which undoubtedly was levelled at the right of the clergy to possess any kind of property; and was intended to be applied to the purpose of setting that right aside. He takes care, however, in his explanation to avoid the direct assertion of his real sentiment by saying only, " this is declared in that doctrinal principle, taught in scripture, according to which we believe that God is to be loved above all things; and our neighbour and enemy are to be loved above all temporal goods: for the law of God cannot be contrary to itself."

Further: " Whether the pope, or temporal lords, or any other persons, shall have endowed the church with temporalities, it is lawful for them to take away the same temporalities, as it were, by way of medicine to prevent sin, notwithstanding any excommunication, because they are not given but under a condition."

" The truth of this," says he, in his explanation, " is evident; because nothing ought to hinder a man from performing the principal works of charity. Yet, God forbid, that by these words occasion should be given to the lords temporal to take away the goods of the church."

I need make no remark on this conclusion and its explanation. The next head I shall mention may be reduced to the same class of sentiments; and seems to show the inconsistency, which I am exposing, in a still more glaring manner.

" If there be a God, the temporal lords may lawfully and meritoriously take away the riches of the church, when the clergy offend habitually."

Any one, who observes the manner in which Wickliff here speaks of the right of the church to worldly possessions, and compares it with his other declara-

tions of the same kind, will not easily perceive on what ground he suffered ecclesiastical property to rest at all. But if he was sincere in the following explanation of this conclusion, the terms of it must appear perfectly insignificant,* and he may seem to have expressed in very equivocal and dangerous language, a tenet in itself perfectly harmless. " If," says he, " there be a God, he is omnipotent; if so, he can command the lords temporal thus to act; and if he may thus command, they may lawfully take away such goods. But God forbid, that any should believe my intention to have been, that secular lords may lawfully take away whatsoever goods they please by their own naked authority: only by the authority of the church they may do so, in cases and in form limited by the laws."

But candour and consistency oblige me to observe, that, there appear, especially in this last case, such sophistical methods of argument, and such evasive modes of speech, as are very incompatible with the character of a reformer. In some of the English manuscripts of Wickliff, the pope is called the insolent priest of Rome, antichristian, robber, &c.; but nothing of this sort of language is found in his explanations† of his tenets. I am much inclined to believe the account of L'Enfant in these transactions, because he is an author in general extremely accurate and judicious; and also, because nothing is more natural than for a man, who, in the confidence of great political support, had carried his ideas of external reformation to an unwarrantable length, and had exhibited too much of a military spirit, on finding himself deprived of that support, to sink into a timidity, which might be productive of artifice and dissimulation. In his work entitled, " The great Sentence of Excommunication explained," the following passage appears: " When shall we see the proud priest of Rome grant plenary indulgences to engage men to live in peace and charity, as

* Fox, p. 494. † L'Enfant's Hist. of Constance.

he does to engage christians to murder each other?" A severe but just reproof! and abundantly verified in this history of the church of Christ. But such boldness and severity of censure, ought to be accompanied with the spirit of martyrdom. In this Wickliff was deficient. It will appear hereafter from the history of the council of Constance, and also from some extracts of this reformer's own writings, that he expressly condemned all ecclesiastical property whatever. Yet he himself enjoyed tithes, and possessed the living of Lutterworth in Leicestershire, to his death.*

From a concise account, of the writings and public lectures of Wickliff, with which we purpose to gratify the reader,† it will also distinctly appear, in what manner he combatted the doctrine of transubstantiation. At the end of one of his English confessions of the sacrament of the altar, he declared, that one third of the clergy were on his side, and would support him at the hazard of their lives. He was, however, condemned by the university for holding heretical opinions in this matter; and, from the chancellor's decree,‡ Wickliff's confessions, and other documents, a judgment may, in some measure, be formed what those opinions really were. Our reformer has been charged with retracting and explaining his meaning, in an artful manner after he had appealed to the secular arm in vain; but here again the reader must determine for himself how far the accusation is well founded. It is certain that his powerful patron, the duke of Lancaster, deserted him on this occasion, and advised him to submit to his natural judges; influenced, it is said, by his dread of the strength of the hierarchy, as well as by scruples of conscience.

Whoever carefully examines the original records, will be convinced that the merits of this reformer have

* It is not to be wondered at, that he, who maintained, "that tithes were mere alms," should be accused of supporting the seditious practices of Tyler, Straw, and the other incendiaries in the time of Richard II. There is no clear evidence, however, that Wickliff ever patronised these men.

† Page 111 of this volume. ‡ P. 113 and 114 ibid.

been considerably exaggerated. His inconsistencies may indeed be palliated, and in part excused. I am apt to believe also, that in his latter days he thought more moderately, and altered some of his wild and irregular notions concerning property: besides, there are such undoubted proofs of his laborious and indefatigable cares in religion, and of his sound comprehension of the essentials of christianity, and of his general probity, integrity, and innocence of life, that I should be extremely sorry, if, in any one instance, he may reasonably be suspected of deliberate hypocrisy. That he sought divine truth, and seriously endeavoured both to teach and to practise it, the general tenor of his life evinces; the testimony also of the best and most upright men who lived nearest his times, is unequivocal in his favour. The great benefit likewise resulting from his labours, both in England and Bohemia, seems to show that God honoured him with evangelical fruitfulness, though it must be owned, that many of his disciples appeared on the whole to have been better christians than himself. That he was really pious can hardly be doubted; and one point of instruction may in some measure compensate the pain which every lover of truth must feel at the discovery of his inconsistencies. It is this: Let serious divines cease to immerse themselves in political concerns: politics was the rock on which this great and good man split, and in his case it clearly appeared, that the work of God is not to be carried on by "the arm of flesh."

To proceed: Wickliff was now delivered from persecution; and was still supported, in some degree, by the secular power and by individuals of distinction, though induced, as the price of that protection to make such sacrifices as are inconsistent with a direct and open sincerity. After this time, he had no trouble from his superiors, at least none that deserves any particular detail, though he certainly continued to the end of his days, in the unremitted exercise of zealous pastoral labours in his parish church of Lutterworth, though he persevered in attacking the abuses of popery by his

writings against the mendicants, against transubstantiation, and against indulgences; and though he produced a translation of the bible from the Latin into the English tongue. This work alone sufficed to render his name immortal. The value of it was unspeakable; and his unwearied pains to propagate the genuine doctrines of revelation among mankind indicated the steady zeal with which he was endowed; while the rage, with which the hierarchy was inflamed against a work so undeniably seasonable, demonstrated, that the ecclesiastical rulers hated the light, and would not come to the light, lest their deeds should be reproved.*

I know no person of ecclesiastical eminence, whose life and character have cost me more thought and care, than Wickliff's. And after all, there is not much to record that deserves the peculiar attention of godly persons. I have consulted the best authorities, and in scrutinizing their contents have been mortified to find, that I could not conscientiously join with the popular cry in ranking this man among the highest worthies of the church. A political spirit, as we have seen, deeply infected his conduct. It nevertheless remains true, that sincere christians, and more particularly the protestants of all succeeding ages, are bound thankfully to acknowledge the divine goodness, for that there actually existed in the personal character of Wickliff "some good thing toward the Lord,"† that such a character was providentially raised up at the very time it was so much wanted, and, that from his labours considerable benefit accrued to the church of Christ, both in England and upon the continent.‡

Wickliff died in peace at Lutterworth, of the palsy, in the year 1387. In the year 1410, his works were burned at Oxford; and in 1428, his remains were dug out of his grave and burned, and his ashes thrown into the river of Lutterworth. The number of his volumes committed to the flames by order of Su-

* John, iii. ver. 20. † 1 Kings, xiv. 13.

‡ A Bohemian gentleman, who studied at Oxford, carried Wickliff's books into Bohemia.

binco* archbishop of Prague, amounted to about two hundred. His labours indeed appear to have been immense; and beyond all doubt, he was in that dark age a prodigy of knowledge.

After having observed that his works were burned at Oxford, it is proper to add, that previous both to this, and also to the burning of his bones by order of the council of Constance, a testimonial was publicly given, by the university of Oxford, to his character, dated in the year 1406, which declares,† "That all his conduct through life was sincere and commendable, that his conversation from his youth upward, to the time of his death, was so praiseworthy and honest, that never at any time was there a particle of suspicion raised against him, and that he vanquished, by the force of the scriptures, all such as slandered Christ's religion. God forbid that our prelates should condemn such a man as an heretic, who has written better than any others in the university, on logic, philosophy, divinity, morality, and the speculative arts." This honourable testimony shows, that the speculative errors of Wickliff, were not attended with practical consequences; and that sedition in church and state, was never meant to be encouraged by that reformer, though the enormities of the age induced him much to exceed the bounds of discretion in his attempts to oppose them.

The distinguishing tenet of Wickliff in religion was, undoubtedly, the election of grace. He calls the church an assembly of predestinated persons. To those, who said that God did not every thing for them, but that their own merits contributed in part to salvation, he replied with a short prayer, "Heal us gratis, O Lord." Those, who have diligently studied the sacred volumes, and also the writings of truly pious christians, will understand, how evangelically humble this reformer might be in the use of such doctrine, and at the same time, how sincerely laborious in in-

* Fox, p. 509 † Ib. p. 515.

culcating whatever belongs to genuine piety and virtue, in opposition to the pharisaic superstitions of the times. And if any one be inclined to doubt this, let him consider, that the eleventh article of our own church says, that we are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Saviour, by faith, and not for our own works and deservings; and yet no sound divine conceives that, for this reason, any man is released from the duty of obeying God's commandments, and of abounding in all the fruits of a pure and evangelical faith.* But let us proceed to give a brief sketch of his doctrines, as extracted from his writings and other authentic documents.

In one of his treatises against the mendicant friars, called " The Complaint of John Wickliff to the King and Parliament," he says,† " If ministers, in the execution of their office, do not act, both by word and example, as God commandeth, their people are not bound to pay them tithes and offerings."

" When the principal cause for which tithes and offerings should be paid does not exist, the payment of tithes should cease. Also clergymen are more to be condemned for withdrawing their teaching in word and in example, then the parishioners are for withdrawing tithes and offerings, even though they discharge their office as they ought."

This last observation presents us with an absurd comparison between two species of transgression; and

* Persons of an arminian way of thinking, are very apt to consider all calvinistic doctrine as of an antinomian tendency; and on the contrary, the calvinist too frequently reproaches the arminian for being of a legal spirit, and for denying the free and unmerited salvation of men by Jesus Christ. NEITHER PARTY SHOULD BE PRESSED WITH CONSEQUENCES WHICH THEY THEMSELVES DISAVOW. The writer of this history is often called upon to form the best estimate he can of religious characters; and for this purpose, the observance of the rule just mentioned, is of the utmost consequence. It is not his province to enter into the discussion of nice theological or metaphysical questions.

† Page 15. N. B. Though several of the quotations which follow are marked with inverted commas, for the sake of distinction, they are to be understood as only containing the substance of Wickliff's sentiments, and not his very words. The originals are frequently in Latin, and often in such antiquated English as would be unintelligible to ordinary readers.

we need not wonder if the doctrine of the whole passage should have often influenced the conduct of misers and extortioners.

In the sixteenth chapter of another treatise against the orders of friars, he directly charges them with perverting the right faith of the sacrament of the altar. "Christ says, that the bread, which he brake and blessed, is his body; and the scripture says openly, that the sacrament is bread that we break and God's body: but they say, 'it is an accident without subject,' and therefore nothing; neither bread nor God's body. Augustin says, 'what we see, is bread, but to those, who are faithfully taught, the bread is Christ's body.' Why should our almighty Saviour conceal this notion of the friars for a thousand years; and never teach the doctrine to his apostles, or to so many saints, but at length communicate it to these hypocrites?"

In his public lectures, which he read, as professor of divinity at Oxford in the summer of 1381,* Wickliff appears to have opposed the papistical doctrine of transubstantiation with all his might; and at the same time to have maintained the true, ancient and scriptural, notion of the Lord's supper. With this view he published sixteen conclusions, the first of which is expressed in these words, "The consecrated host, which we see upon the altar is neither Christ nor any part of him, but an effectual sign of him." And he offered to defend this and his other conclusions in public disputation with any one. But he was prohibited by the rulers of the university and doctors of divinity. Upon which Wickliff published a defence† of his doctrine, which the intelligent reader will think less satisfactory than the above mentioned conclusion. "The eucharist," says he, "is the body of Christ in the form of bread. The right faith of christian men is this, that this worshipful sacrament is bread and Christ's body, as Jesus Christ is very God and very man."

* Hist. and Antiq. Oxon. A. D. 1381.
† MS. on a feigned contemplative life.

In his Trialog.* he observes, "that though the bread in the eucharist begins to be the body of Christ, by virtue of the consecration, it must not be believed that it ceases to be bread. It is plain it is SUBSTANTIALLY bread, because it begins to be SACRAMENTALLY the body of Christ. So Christ says, This is my body. The nature of bread is not thenceforth destroyed, but is exalted into a substance of greater dignity. In a similar way the BAPTIST was made Elias, by virtue of Christ's words in the eleventh of St. Matthew, yet he did not cease to be John. And St. Austin observes, that the scripture does not say that seven ears of corn and seven fat kine SIGNIFY seven years of plenty, but that they ARE those years. Such expressions denote that the subject is ordained of God to FIGURE the thing predicated according to its fitness. And in the same sense and manner the sacramental bread is specially the body of Christ." Wickliff very modestly concludes this explanation, with declaring, "that he was ready to believe a more subtile sense, if he could be convinced of the truth of it by scripture or reason."

We have observed above that Wickliff, in the matter of transubstantiation, appears both to have opposed the papistical doctrine, and also to have maintained the true. But the discerning reader cannot fail to remark, that authentic documents leave the former proposition in much less doubt than they do the latter.

The chancellor of the university of Oxford, after reciting, before several doctors in divinity, the reformer's conclusions, namely first, That in the sacrament the substance of the material bread and wine remain the same after consecration; and secondly, That in that venerable sacrament the body and blood of Christ are not present essentially, but only figuratively, with their consent decreed that, "These are execrable errors, and repugnant to the determinations of the church."†

* Lib. iv. cap. 4.

† Spelman, vol. ii.

From this decree of the chancellor, Wickliff appealed to the king. But the duke of Lancaster,* who had countenanced his opposition to papal usurpation, did not approve his heretical sentiments respecting the received doctrine of the real presence; and is said to have enjoined silence to this bold innovator on that head. Soon after this, Wickliff published a long, obscure, and equivocal sort of confession, which by his enemies has been termed a retraction of his sentiments. In this confession he declares his belief in the following terms. "The same body of Christ which was incarnate of the Virgin, which suffered on the cross, which lay three days in the grave, and rose again on the third day, this same body and same substance is verily and really the sacramental bread or consecrated host, which we see in the hands of the priest." But he presently adds,† "That he dare not say that the body of Christ, considered as an EXTENDED BODY, is essentially and substantially the bread: There is a threefold manner of the body of Christ being in the consecrated host, viz. a virtual, spiritual, and sacramental." And so in his Trialogus he says, "this sacrament is the body of Christ; and not only that which shall be, or which figures sacramentally the body of Christ." And again, "That the host is to be adored principally for this reason, not because it is in some respect the body of Christ, but because it contains in a secret manner the body of Christ within itself." He is very constant in asserting‡ "That the bread, by the words of consecration, is not made the Lord's glorified body, or his spiritual body, which is risen from the dead, nor his fleshly body as it was before he suffered death; but that the bread still continues bread; and so there is bread and the body of Christ together."

Some of Wickliff's admirers, who can see no defects in their favourite, would explain the contradictions, and obscurities, which are to be found in his various writings and confessions on the subject of

* Walsingh. Hist. Angliæ. and Antiq. Oxon. † Wickliff's Confession.
‡ See Wickliff's Wicket. and Trialog. lib. iv.

transubstantiation, by affirming, that he discovered the truth gradually, and that he was late in fixing his opinions on the Lord's supper. And if this could be made out, it would doubtless, be a very natural and a very satisfactory defence of the reformer; but let us attend to the sentiments of a very great man, whose extensive learning, and extraordinary candour, were never called in question. "I have looked,"* says Melancthon, "into Wickliff, who is very confused in this controversy of the Lord's supper; but I have found in him, also, many other errors, by which a judgment may be made of his spirit. He neither understood nor believed the righteousness of faith. He foolishly confounds the gospel and politics; and does not see that the gospel allows us to make use of the lawful forms of government of all nations. He contends, that it is not lawful for priests to have any property. He wrangles sophistically and downright seditiously about civil dominion. In the same manner he cavils sophistically against the received opinion of the Lord's supper."

The most important Latin performance of Wickliff, seems to be his Trialogus; from which several passages have already been quoted for the purpose of elucidating the author's sentiments on the doctrine of transubstantiation.

This brilliant work was answered by WIDEFORT, a franciscan, who dedicated his laboured reply to archbishop Arundel. L'Enfant tells us, in his history of the council of Constance, that he found a copy of the Trialogus in the university of Frankfort on the Oder. It contains a dialogue between three speakers, whom the author calls, Truth, Falsehood, and Wisdom. With what vehemence he opposed the fashionable abuses may be collected from a single sentence respecting the crime of simony. "Those stupid simonists imagine that grace may be bought and sold like an ox or an ass." And speaking of the invocation of

* Sententiæ veterum de cæna Domini.

saints, he observes, "the festival of the day is to no purpose, if it do not tend to magnify Jesus Christ, and induce men to love HIM. Moreover, our redeemer Jesus Christ is very God, as well as very man, and therefore, on account of his divinity, he must infinitely exceed any other man. And this consideration induces many to think that it would be expedient to worship no other being among men except Jesus Christ; insomuch as he is the best mediator and best intercessor; and they likewise think, that when this was the practice of the church, it increased and prospered much better than it does now. What folly then to apply to any other person to be our intercessor? What folly to choose of two persons proposed, the less eligible of the two, to be our intercessor? Would any one choose the king's buffoon to be an intercessor? The saints in heaven are not indeed buffoons; but in dignity they are less, compared with Jesus Christ, than a buffoon is, when compared with an earthly king."

He is very pointed in asserting the authority of scripture, which, he maintains, infinitely surpasses the authority of any other writings whatsoever; and he declares, that to hold the contrary, is the most damnable of all heresies. He assures us, that he so strenuously combatted, in the university and before the people, the errors on the sacrament, because none had proved more destructive to mankind. "These errors," says he, "fleece men and draw them into idolatry: they then deny the faith of the scriptures; and by their infidelity provoke the God of truth." Such were the principles of Wickliff, and such the testimonies which he has left against the corruptions of the church of Rome.

There is preserved in the library of the cathedral of York, an apology for Wickliff, written by Dr. Thomas James, keeper of the public library at Oxford, for the purpose of showing this great reformer's conformity with the present church of England. The contents of the apology are collected chiefly from

Wickliff's own manuscripts. I shall present the reader with a few quotations.

Speaking of the scriptures, Wickliff says, "I think it absurd to be warm in defence of the apocryphal books when we have so many which are undeniably authentic. In order to distinguish canonical books from such as are apocryphal, use the following rules: 1. Look into the new testament, and see what books of the old testament are therein cited and authenticated by the Holyghost. 2. Consider whether the like doctrine be delivered by the Holyghost elsewhere in the scripture." These observations to us, no doubt, appear extremely obvious, and no more than plain, common sense: but those, who are aware of the dominion of prejudice in the age of Wickliff, and of the implicit obedience then shown to ecclesiastical authority, will be best qualified to appreciate that vigor of understanding, and that resolute integrity, which could produce such sentiments, and a correspondent practical conduct.

Dr. James the compiler tells us, that Wickliff was earnest, every where in his writings, to establish the grand protestant sentiment, of the sufficiency of the scriptures for saving instruction; and that the reason of his earnestness and pious zeal was, in substance, this, "Few sermons were preached in his time; and those few were on fabulous subjects and traditions, and profaned with much scurrility and emptiness. Friars persecuted the faithful, and said, it had never been well with the church since lords and ladies regarded the gospel, and relinquished the manners of their ancestors."

"Some," he says, "are enlightened from above that they may explain the proper, literal, and historical, sense of scripture, in which sense all things necessary in scripture are contained."

This remark was doubtless made to guard his readers against the devious paths of fantastic and endless allegories, in which the sportive genius of Origen had been so conversant; and which, for ages, had

thrown so great a cloud over the genuine meaning of the sacred writers. It was, at the same time, a strong indication of the native vigor of that good sense, with which the pastor of Lutterworth was eminently endowed; and his idea of divine assistance, as necessary to qualify a man for the explanation of the revealed word, indicates his knowledge of our natural blindness and depravity; and further, in making this last observation, he doubtless, intimates the very great advantage, which, as a religious instructor, a person, who is practically led by the Spirit of God, has over a mere selfsufficient theorist depending on the use of his own understanding. We have indeed, from the extreme disadvantages of obscurity, in which this author's works appear, little opportunity of estimating his merits as a theologian; but it is sufficiently evident from a few fragments* of his voluminous writings, that, in light and talents, he was greatly superior to his contemporaries; and if he had escaped the snare of that political speculation, which encourages sedition, and makes Christ's kingdom to be of this world, he might have stood among the foremost of those geniuses, who, since the apostolic age, have been raised up by providence to instruct and reform the human race.

" Sanctity of life," he observes, " promotes this ILLUMINATION so necessary for understanding the revealed word; to continue which in the church is the duty of theologians, who ought to remain within their proper limits, and not to invent things foreign to the faith of scripture."

He lays down some good rules for an expositor. 1. He should be able by collation of manuscripts to settle well the sacred text. 2. He should be conversant in logic. 3. He should be constantly engaged in

* Sublnco, archbishop of Prague, about the year 1409, endeavoured to collect all the writings of Wickliff, which had been introduced into Bohemia. He is said to have gotten into his possession 200 of them, all which he burnt by virtue of a royal edict. Camerarius Historica Narratio, p. 32.

comparing one part of scripture with another. 4. The student should be a man of prayer, and his disposition should be upright. 5. He needs the internal instruction of the primary Teacher." This last is Augustin's favourite idea; namely, that a genuine relish for divine aid in rightly interpreting and applying scripture is the sure index of an humble spirit; and that the contempt of it no less powerfully indicates the prevalence of profaneness or selfconceit.

The council of Constance condemned this great man for denying the pope's supremacy. We shall afterwards see, that that council is entitled to little regard. What colour they might have for their censure seems to be grounded on his avowed opinion, that all the bishops of Rome before his time for three hundred years had been heretics: and yet he advances, that whoever disobeys the papal mandates, incurs the charge of paganism."* By comparing these two passages together, it seems that he was willing to own the supremacy of that see, provided it was filled by a faithful pastor.

Further in Dr. James's collection, there are also extracts and observations, in substance, as follows:

"The merit of Christ is of itself sufficient to redeem every man from hell. Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ is sufficient for salvation; and without faith it is impossible to please God."

And the writer informs us, that, on the leading controversy respecting justification, Wickliff accorded fully with the church of England; and that he persuaded men "to trust wholly to Christ, to rely altogether upon his sufferings, and not to seek to be justified in any other way than by his justice:" that he said, "Unbelievers, though they might perform works apparently good in their matter, still were not to be accounted righteous men; that all, who followed Christ, became righteous through the participation of his righteousness, and would be saved." He adds the fol-

* Apology, chap. on the pope. sect. 1.

lowing sentences. " Human nature is wholly at enmity with God: All men are originally sinners, not only from their mother's wombs, but in their mother's wombs: We cannot think a good thought unless Jesus send it: We cannot perform a good work unless it be properly his good work: His mercy prevents us so that we receive grace; and it follows us so as to help us and keep us in grace. Heal us, good Lord, we have no merit! Give us grace to know that all thy gifts be of thy goodness only."*

I recommend these hints to the particular notice of such serious readers as set a high value on the essential truths of the gospel. They will draw their own conclusions from them. In regard to myself, I have been much mortified to find so little recorded from Wickliff's writings respecting these truths, even by his most diligent biographers. Two of these, very great admirers of this reformer, either did not comprehend the great doctrines of justification by faith, and of the nature of good works, or, they must have thought them of little consequence. On all other points they dwell with sufficient accuracy, and with a minuteness of detail; whereas if they touch on these at all, it is done with the greatest reserve; and the little they say is far from being clear. Yet both of the authors to whom I allude, show that they were well aware of the above mentioned censure of Wickliff by Melancthon;† for one of them has given a very unsatisfactory answer to the charge; and the other appears to me to have evaded the question, and to have presented his reader with a very imperfect view of Wickliff's sentiments on a most important point. He barely says, " Wickliff asserted the necessity of divine grace. Without this, he saw not how a human being could make himself acceptable to God." Every admirer of Wickliff, if he also be a sincere approver of the inestimable protestant doctrines concerning the grace of

* De Veritate Script. in Expos. Decal. Comment. in Psalm.

† Page 115. of this vol.

God and of the justification of man, will be gratified in reading the sentiments I have produced from Dr. James's collection. If such sentiments abound not in Wickliff's writings so much as sound and enlightened christians might wish, it becomes the more necessary to take notice of those which we do find there. At least the plan of this history, which professes to search everywhere for the real church of Christ, rendered these remarks indispensably necessary.

The apology by Dr. James contains many other memorable sentiments of this reformer: Among which is this:

" We worship not the image, but the being represented by the image, say the patrons of idolatry in our times. Suffice it to say, idolatrous heathens said the same."

He also vehemently opposed the whole doctrine of indulgences; and expressed in the most decisive manner, his disapprobation of forced vows of celibacy, either in the case of monks or of the secular clergy. He is accused of having been an enemy to all oaths; but the apology proves directly the contrary; also a passage in his book against the mendicant friars, seems to invalidate the charge. " God," says he, " teaches us to swear by himself, when necessity calls for it, and not by his creatures."

It has been thought, I am well aware, that the reformers of the sixteenth century built on the foundation, which Wickliff had laid. But his knowledge of christian doctrine, though fundamentally sound, was yet so defective, so obscure, and so scholastical, while that of those admirable reformers, carries such internal marks of originality, of accurate method, and of solid scriptural investigation, that they do not appear to have followed him at all as a guide in theology. We have seen that Melancthon, one of the most judicious and candid of them, thought, that Wickliff understood not the doctrine of the righteousness of faith. It might, perhaps be nearer the truth to say that, in an accurate knowledge of that important article he seems to have

been defective. At the same time, however, that his light respecting pure evangelical doctrine was scanty, his views of external reformation erred in the extreme of excess. He disliked ALL church endowments, and wished to have the clergy reduced to a state of poverty. He insists that parishioners had a right to withhold tithes from pastors who were guilty of fornication. Now if, in such cases, he would have allowed every individual to have judged for himself, who does not see what a door might be opened to confusion, fraud, and the encouragement of avarice?

In vitum ducit culpæ fuga, si caret arte. HOR.

Never was this remark of the poet more completely exemplified than in the conduct of Wickliff. An honest indignation on account of the enormities and immense revenues of the clergy in his day, led this extraordinary genius to use rash and indefensible expressions, which his own practice, in regard to his benefice at Lutterworth, seemed to contradict. Hence I am led to conclude, that this good man intended not absolutely, on this subject, the whole of what he uttered in his warmth. Hath the Lord ordained, that they, who "preach the gospel, should live of the gospel."* And have pastors, after all, no right to be maintained by their people? Doubtless, they have not, if it be true, that all which they receive, is properly to be called alms. Or, ought they, whose business it is, to instruct their flocks in their most important and eternal concerns, to be placed in situations not really differing from those of beggars? In such a view, the whole body of the clergy might justly be denominated MENDICANTS, the very orders of men, against which Wickliff so copiously inveighed. This whole sentiment of reducing the tithes and offerings conferred on the clergy to alms, however it may flatter the pride and avarice, and profaneness of many of the laity in our days, appears on every account perfectly indefensible. The very nature of alms supposes,

* 1 Cor. ix. 14.

that the objects of them are recommended to our regard, not by the services which they perform, but by the distresses which they endure. Is this the proper light in which we should view the character of a christian pastor; or, can this be called in any degree a just representation of the functions of a teacher of the gospel? And, lastly, are spiritual services of so little estimation, as to claim no reward from those on whom they are conferred?

This great defect in Wickliff's ideas of church reformation very much lessened his reputation in the eyes of those reformers, who followed him. Melancthon in particular, a zealous friend of order and decorum, represents him, as we have already seen, to have been in this respect, destitute of all sobriety of judgment. It is not to be denied, however, that he was a light in his day. There is reason to believe, that many, who were by no means disposed to defend his errors, admired his virtues; and even those, who would describe his lanthorn as dimly scattering only a few obscure rays of evangelical truth, must still confess that it sufficed to discover to mankind the turpitude of the works of darkness, which predominated in England. The inestimable present of the word of God in their own language, with which he was enabled to favour his countrymen, conveyed instruction to great numbers: there was an effusion of the divine Spirit; and in the next chapter we must attend to its effects.

The reader is now to judge, whether from the historical facts, which have been laid before him, together with the extracts from the writings of Wickliff, the writer of this ecclesiastical history be well founded in the observations, which he has made on the character and opinion of this celebrated reformer. And, though it is much to be regretted, that, in regard to certain parts of his conduct, neither the purity of his motives, nor the clearness of his knowledge can be so ascertained, as entirely to stifle suspicion, or silence objection, yet is our information sufficient to explain

several things which appear inconsistent or contradictory as recorded by memorialists and biographers.

For example, 1. We may allow and lament, that in certain difficult and dangerous moments of his life, there existed in the defences and explanations of Wickliff, more equivocation and artifice than are consistent with the simplicity of character which should mark a true disciple and follower of Jesus Christ; but when this defect is admitted, who can deny, that, on the whole, he was a sincere believer of christianity, and a zealous advocate for its essential doctrines? Mr. Hume had too much good sense, and was too acute an observer, not to discover in Wickliff this firm belief of the christian religion, and this fervent love of the great truths, which it teaches; but in order to appreciate justly HIS remarks on any religious character of this kind, we ought to keep in view the well known prejudices of this otherwise incomparable historian. His dislike of the gospel of Christ is so perfect and complete, that wherever he finds sincerity in believing and zeal in supporting and propagating its fundamentals, these dispositions sink, in his esteem, all such persons without exception; and, in most cases, when the question turns intirely upon religion, we expect in vain from him, not only the candour and moderation of a philosophical critic, but the justice and impartiality of an upright judge. Mr. Hume's account of Wickliff is as follows.* "He denied the doctrine of the real presence, the supremacy of the church of Rome, the merit of monastic vows. He maintained, that the scripture was the sole rule of faith; that the church was dependent on the state, and should be reformed by it; that the clergy ought to possess no estates; that the begging friars were a general nuisance, and ought not to be supported; that the numerous ceremonies of the church were hurtful to true piety. He asserted that oaths were unlawful, that dominion was founded in grace, that every thing was

* Hume, Rich. II. chap. 17

subject to fate and destiny, and that all men were preordained either to eternal salvation or reprobation." This same historian also owns, that the doctrines of Wickliff were derived from his search into the scriptures and into ecclesiastical antiquity; and he tells us that they were nearly the same with those which were propagated, by reformers in the sixteenth century. After such a detail, who would expect the author to conclude with this remarkable sentence? "From the WHOLE of his doctrine, Wickliff appears to have been strongly tinctured with ENTHUSIASM, and to have been thereby better qualified to oppose a church, whose chief characteristic is SUPERSTITION." Therefore, according to Mr. Hume's judgment, it was not so much the rational argumentation of Wickliff, or his diligent search into the scriptures, as his enthusiasm, which qualified him to become a formidable adversary of the papal superstitions and corruptions. If Wickliff had opposed the abominations of the church of Rome by ridicule and banter, by scorn and contempt, by sceptical objections to revelation in general, and by these methods only, he would probably have escaped this censure.

"He was distinguished," Mr. Hume says, "by a great austerity of life and manners;" and the historian then coolly observes, that this is "a circumstance common to almost all those, who DOGMATIZE IN ANY NEW WAY." Infidel philosophers and infidel historians, never comprehend how the honour of God, and the salvation of men can be the ruling principles of a rational conduct. The profession of such principles appear to them to be connected with hypocrisy or enthusiasm: and therefore in estimating the merits of truly religious characters, they make no candid allowance, for the weakness and imperfection of human nature; but are most ingenious and acute in discovering faults and inconsistencies, as well as bitter and sarcastic in exposing them. If, on the one hand, I have been mortified in finding myself constrained to differ from many in their unbounded applause of Dr. Wickliff, I have

felt it a duty on the other, to correct the uncandid and injurious representations of a profane historian, who would insinuate to the minds of the unwary, that this reformer, "though a man of parts and learning," was in fact a cautious or cowardly enthusiast. The defects and inconsistencies, with which, in the former part of this account, I acknowledge the memory of this great man to be considerably stained, afford some handle for the suspicion of timidity or cowardice; but, for the charge of enthusiasm the historian has no warrant whatever. Moreover, supposing it true, that Wickliff's timid disposition, or any other cause, induced him to decline the praise of martyrdom, is it not at least equally true, that he involved himself in much danger and difficulty by bringing forward his opinions; that the showed much courage and ability in supporting them, and that rather than retract them, he suffered heavy persecutions with great patience and fortitude? Did the philosophic Mr. Hume infer the nature of a man's disposition from an occasional imbecility manifested in some trying moments, rather than from the uniform tenor of his conduct? Or did he esteem every man a coward or a hypocrite, who, in explaining his religious sentiments, may, in some instances, have softened them, or perhaps equivocated, for the purpose of saving his life?*

I consider this as ONE very clear and decisive instance of Mr. Hume's prejudice and partiality. There are many others, in his very excellent writings, of a similar kind. He has a very sly and artful way of insinuating his own opinions, and of depreciating truly religious men; and it is not a sufficient guard against this practice, merely to advertise the young student that this is actually the case, and that therefore he must be constantly on the watch. Clear instances, like this respecting Wickliff, should be produced. It would be very easy to collect a number of a similar sort; and such a collection of particular and distinct examples

* Hume, ibid

would be infinitely more efficacious in preventing the daily mischief done by this author's rash assertions, and dangerous insinuations, than numerous pages of GENERAL disapprobation or abuse with which many well intentioned publications continually abound. Such general disapprobation or abuse of an author, whose excellencies the student is in the habit of seeing and admiring, is apt to disgust by frequent repetition rather than to be productive of caution. Show the student that his favourite historian or philosopher is under the dominion of the most violent prejudices, and that he is capable of misrepresenting notorious facts, do this, even in one instance only, and the memory of it will sink deep into his mind, and prove salutary in its consequences.

2. But other causes, besides a spirit of opposition to revealed religion, have contributed not a little to render some circumstances in our histories of Wickliff contradictory and inconsistent. Let a few hints suffice.

This nation had so long groaned under the evils of popery, that, for many years after the reformation, it was the custom with ecclesiastical writers of the protestant class, to be continually venting their indignation against papal tyranny and superstition. And though it be very true, that the abominations of the Roman church form so shocking a narrative, that our aversion to that antichristian hierarchy can hardly be raised to too high a pitch; nevertheless, the integrity of history may easily have suffered in particular instances through this aversion, however laudable and well founded the disposition in itself may have been. Further: an ardent love of freedom, and an unconquerable hatred of slavish doctrines, both in civil and ecclesiastical institutions, are well known to constitute in general, a striking feature of the British character. Now with these two considerations in view, let it be remembered also, that Wickliff has unquestionably the honour of being the first person in Europe that publicly called in question, by his discourses, sermons and writings, those principles, which had universally

passed for certain and undisputed during many ages, and then, I think, we must cease to wonder, that this reformer's conduct and opinions should have been often exhibited to us in the most glowing terms of veneration and respect; which terms, however may be expected to vary materially, according as the sentiments of the historian or biographer have more or less of an aristocratic or a popular tendency; and again, according as the writer's views of ecclesiastical government are confined to merely political considerations, or as they extend to the eternal interests of mankind. No apology can be necessary for having freely animadverted upon such a writer as Mr. Hume; but it might be invidious to exemplify the distinctions here alluded to by apposite quotations from authors, whose zeal for liberty, or whose predilection for particular sentiments, appear to me to have carried them unwarrantable lengths in the commendation of Wickliff. The student of ecclesiastical history will, however, do well to recollect, that unless he keeps these and similar distinctions in his mind, and carefully allows for them, he will be much bewildered in his researches. The bigoted papist usually loses his patience in describing the principles and conduct of Wickliff: the unbeliever, in treating the same subject, sees no difficulties, but what are easily explained on the supposition of enthusiasm, hypocrisy, pride of the human heart, or love of popularity: moderate divines, even of the roman catholic persuasion, support Wickliff to a certain point, particularly in his attack of the abuses, which interfered with their own interests and privileges: protestant divines may be expected to defend the reformer much further: and, in fact, those protestants, who are usually denominated low churchmen, have shown themselves disposed to transmit his memory to posterity with the most exalted encomiums. His manly freedom in inquiring after truth, and his great boldness in defending it and in encountering dangers, please them so much, that they become almost blind to the faults, errors, and defects, of their favourite

ecclesiastic. Lastly, it deserves, also, to be remembered, that those, who are most godly and practical in their conversation, and whose lives are most devoted to promote the salvation of the souls of men, who are the least worldly minded, and meddle the least with political discussions, and controversies, such persons, with regret, are compelled to withhold an unlimited approbation of Wickliff. They gratefully praise God for having raised up a champion for the faith of the gospel in the most perilous times, and when very much needed; they rejoice in finding evidence that this celebrated champion did belong to the true church of Christ; they charitably hope and believe that he said and did many things, which, had they been recorded, might perhaps have made it still clearer that he belonged to the most distinguished part of Christ's little flock; and lastly, they sincerely lament, that so honoured a servant of God, should seem, on any occasion in supporting the righteous cause of religion, to have relied on political dexterity or on the favour of a court, or to have afforded a handle for the suspicion of artifice and duplicity.

For the purpose of still further explaining the different degrees of panegyric or of calumny with which the character of Wickliff is loaded by historians and biographers, there remain several considerations, to which the reader will do well to advert.

1. The mendicant friars, who settled in Oxford about the year 1230, proved very troublesome and offensive to the university. Their insolent behaviour produced endless quarrels, and their conduct in general was so exceptionable, that so far from being objects of charity, they became a reproach to all religion. Wickliff lashed this set of men with great acrimony and acuteness; and by exposing their shameful corruptions and hypocritical pretences, made known his learning and talents; and established his own reputation and consequence. He became at once the beloved and the admired champion of the university. On the contrary, the mendicants " were set on a rage and mad-

ness; and even as hornets with their sharp stings they assailed this good man on every side, fighting for their altars, paunches and bellies."* But the daring, active spirit of Wickliff was not to be overcome by the opposition of such men. Fortunately for him, they were in the highest discredit at Oxford; whereas our reformer was looked up to almost as an oracle; for he had not, as yet, proceeded to those lengths of innovation, which afterwards called forth the vengeance of the hierarchy, and involved him in various difficulties and persecutions. His friends procured him a benefice; he took his degree of doctor of divinity; he was elected into the professor's chair; and he read lectures publicly with the greatest applause.†

2. The credit and interest of Wickliff were much strengthened by the active part which he took in supporting the independence of the crown, against the pope's pretensions and menaces. Pope Urban, claimed a tribute from king Edward III. The clergy in general espoused the cause of his holiness; but Wickliff distinguished himself, by publishing a masterly answer to the most plausible arguments, which could be produced in support of so unjust a demand. This step irritated his brethren, the clergy, with the pope at their head; the professor of divinity, however, had the parliament, as well as every disinterested subject of the realm, on his side in this question. From the same cause he seems to have been first made known at court, and particularly to the duke of Lancaster. His great learning, increasing celebrity, and powerful connexions, all contributed to support his courage, and to give vigour to the resolutions which he had secretly made for reforming the prevailing corruptions. Accordingly, he proceeded to open the eyes of the people with still greater boldness and plainness of speech. He demonstrated the romish religion to be a system of errors: he attacked the scandalous lives of the monastic clergy; and showed how they invented and multiplied such

* Fox's Acts and Monuments. † Leland de Scrip. Brit

superstitious opinions and doctrines, as suited their worldly, sensual, and avaricious views.

3. These extraordinary steps both alarmed the hierarchy and excited its resentment. The clergy raised violent clamours against the heretic: the archbishop of Canterbury took the lead; and the professor was silenced and deprived. In this very moment of his disgrace, we find Dr. Wickliff was brought to court, treated with peculiar kindness, and appointed one of the king's ambassadors,* for the purpose of treating with the pope, concerning a variety of intolerable hardships and usurpations under which the nation had long groaned. On his return, he appears to have recovered his station in Oxford, and to have inveighed against the church of Rome, in harsher language than he had ever done before, both in his public lectures and in private. His negotiations abroad with the pope's nuncios had, probably, afforded him opportunities of seeing more striking proofs of the ambition, covetousness, tyranny, and insolence of the papal domination. In this part of the history of our reformer, there is considerable defect and obscurity. We find however that, notwithstanding his employments in the university, he did not neglect to cultivate his great connexions. He was often at court, and continued in high credit with the duke of Lancaster; and though, by many of the clergy, he was esteemed an enemy to the church and a false brother, he obtained the valuable rectory of Lutterworth, through the royal favour. These facts deserve particular notice; as they determine several points beyond all controversy: namely, the great weight of Wickliff's character and reputation; his disposition to political concerns and to public business; and lastly, the sources of that esteem and applause on the one hand; and, on the other, of that hatred and calumny which he met with so plentifully in the former part of his life.

4. While the reformer confined himself to attacks

* Rymer's Fœdera A. D. 1374.

on the luxury and indolence of the mendicant friars, he was the favourite of the university of Oxford: while he only opposed the exorbitant claims of the papacy upon the king and his subjects, he was admired and applauded by the English court and parliament. His conduct however, in both these instances, marked him at the court of Rome as an object of detestation and vengeance; and we need not wonder, if the ecclesiastical dignitaries in England, and the regular clergy in general, sympathized with the pope in sentiment and feeling. But as soon as Wickliff began to assail the roman catholic religion in a closer manner, and to level his batteries at its very foundations; when he was no longer content with exposing the infamous lives and practices of the monastic orders, or with declaiming against the avaricious encroachments and contemptible superstitions of the papal system; when he proceeded to show how the pure doctrines of the gospel, and the true spirit of christianity were almost lost amidst the innumerable abominations of popery; when he descended to particulars, attacked the reigning doctrines of transubstantiation, of worshipping images, and deceased saints, and above all, of merits and satisfactions, and restored in their place the sound evangelical doctrines of the meritorious sacrifice of our Saviour, and of justification by faith, we then find the whole hierarchy in a flame. The archbishop of Canterbury and the bishop of London then complain to the pope; and the pope in great wrath sends bull after bull, to those dignitaries, directing them to take immediate cognisance of Wickliff's heresies, and to imprison him. Hence the citation, of which and of its consequences we have already given a concise account.* And it deserves to be remembered, how in that affair the pope and his delegates had the art to select such articles of accusation against the innovator, as might bring the least odium upon themselves, and at the same time, prove a severe trial of the for-

* Page 103—111, of this volume.

titude and sincerity of the heretic, and be likely to involve him in much difficulty and equivocation. Hence also the chancellor's peremptory decree, at Oxford,* against Wickliff's notions of transubstantiation; and we may add, hence also the decline of our theologian's interest with the nobility and worldly persons of all descriptions. To understand this rightly, we should constantly keep in view the distinction that is to be made between the applause which, in general, failed not to accompany Wickliff, as a censurer of gross immoralities, and an advocate for religious liberty, and the cold approbation or sceptical reserve with which he was treated, considered as a preacher of the pure gospel of Christ and a reviver of the most important practical truths. In the former case, he met with few to oppose or envy him, except those who were immediately interested in supporting vice or usurpation; but, in regard to the latter, the greater part of mankind did as they have often done in far more enlightened times: they either suspected that he carried his notions too far, or they kept aloof from him with a profane and indolent negligence, or lastly, they wavered between the religion in which they had been educated, and the reformer's novelties, and by immersing themselves in business, or in pleasure, both stifled the convictions of conscience, and escaped the dangers of persecution.

5. It will easily be conceived, that to accomplish Wickliff's views, one of the most popular, and at the same time most useful steps, which he could possibly have taken, was his translation of the bible into the English language. The clergy indeed clamoured against this measure almost universally; and it may be instructive, as well as entertaining to the reader, to see by a short quotation from a learned canon† of Leicester, and a contemporary of Wickliff, what was thought to be good reasoning by the ecclesiastics of that day. "Christ," says he, "committed the gospel

* Page 113, of this volume.

† Knyghton, de Event.

to the clergy and doctors of the church, that they might minister it to the laity and weaker persons, according to the exigency of times and person's wants; but this master John Wickliff translated it out of Latin into English; and by that means laid it more open to the laity and to women who could read, than it used to be to the most learned of the clergy, and those of them who had the best understanding. And so the gospel pearl is cast abroad and trodden under swine; and that which used to be precious to both clergy and laity, is made, as it were, the common jests of both; and the jewel of the church is turned into the sport of the laity."

In our times, one cannot but be astonished, that the bishops, after much consultation, should have brought a bill into parliament to suppress Wickliff's bible; but it was thrown out by a great majority.

The effect, which, under the direction of the good providence of God, the publication of the holy scriptures translated into our own language, produced on the minds of men, must have been very considerable in no great length of time: and it is not easy to conceive how any human means could contribute more to the spreading of the essential doctrines of christianity. I wish that several diligent and spirited panegyrists of Wickliff had shown an anxiety, in their laudable researches into antiquity, to furnish instances of the conversion of our countrymen, from the ways of the world to the practice of godliness. That many such instances did exist, through the indefatigable labours of Wickliff in public and in private, I doubt not; yet I mean not to insinuate, that if they had been recorded, they would have added much to the fame or celebrity of the reformer, in the present circumstances of the world. There is indeed, in the holy scriptures, a most encouraging promise to those that be wise, and who shall "turn many unto righteousness;" but, it is not in this state of existence, it is when they shall awake from their sleep in the dust of the

earth, that they shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever.*

6. To return: Let the reader remember, that Wickliff not only published an English translation of the bible; but also pleaded, in a very spirited and sensible manner, the RIGHT of the people to read the scriptures.† All this tended the more to provoke the clergy, and to increase his popularity with the laity. Disinterested persons of every description, if they possessed the least degree of seriousness, and liberality of thinking, must have been gratified to have the bible rescued from obscurity; though we may allow without difficulty, that many sincere roman catholics of the unlearned and weaker sort, may have been greatly puzzled and distressed in their minds, between the discoveries made to them by the scriptures, and that mass of wretched superstitions, which they had been accustomed to receive, all their days, with implicit faith.

If these facts and suggestions prove useful to the curious reader, who wishes to understand and settle the character of this extraordinary reformer, and to account for the various lights, and I might add, the various obscurities in which he has been transmitted to us, I have gained my aim. I shall conclude this whole narrative with two short quotations.

The first is, from a very concise life of Wickliff, written by Dr. Thomas James, author of the apology already mentioned.

" God gave Dr. Wickliff grace to see the truth of his gospel, and by seeing it, to lothe all superstition and popery. . . . . By Abelard and others, he was grounded in the right faith of the sacrament of the Lord's supper; by Bradwardine in the nature of a true sole-justifying faith, against merit-mongers and pardoners, PELAGIANS and PAPISTS. Finally, by reading Grosseteste's works, in whom he seemed to be

* Dan. xii. 2, 3.
† Speculum secular: also Doctrin. Christiana, lib.

most conversant, he descried the pope to be antichrist."

The second is a very solemn declaration of Wickliff, contained in one of his Latin tracts.*

"Let God be my witness," says he, "that I principally intend the honour of God, and the good of the church, from a spirit of veneration to the divine word, and of obedience to the law of Christ. But if, with that intention, a sinister view of vain glory, of secular gain, or of vindictive malice, hath crept in unknown to myself, I sincerely grieve on the account, and, by the grace of God, will guard against it."

Dr. James asks, "What could be spoken more ingenuously, soberly, or christianly."†

* De Ver. Script. † Dr. James's Apology

CENTURY XV.

CHAP. I.

The Lollards.

TERMS of reproach have, in all ages, been applied to real christians. Lollard, the name given to the followers of Wickliff, is to be considered as one of them. My chief reason for using it is, that the persons, whose story is the subject of this chapter, may be more distinctly defined.

That same Courtney, bishop of London, whose examination of Wickliff, together with the extraordinary circumstances, which attended that examination, has been laid before the reader, afterwards became archbishop of Canterbury; and, in that exalted station, employed himself with great vehemence and asperity against the disciples of the man who, by the protection of the duke of Lancaster, had escaped his vengeance. King Richard II. also, was induced to patronise this persecution, though it does not appear that during his reign, any of the lollards were actually put to death. That the blind fury of ambitious and unprincipled men was thus, for a time, restrained from committing the last acts of injustice and barbarity, is to be ascribed, partly to the power of the duke of Lancaster, who may be called the political father of the lollards; and partly to the influence of Anne, the consort of Richard II. and sister of Wenceslaus, king of Bohemia. The accounts of this princess, in regard to religion, are brief; yet they merit our particular attention, because they seem to illustrate the course of divine providence, in paving the way for that con-

nexion between England and Bohemia, by which the labours of Wickliff became so serviceable in propagating the gospel in the latter country. She lived with king Richard about eleven years; and died in the year 1394, in the seventeenth year of his reign.* It is remarked of her, that she had in her possession the gospels in the English language, with four learned commentators upon them. At her funeral, Arundel, archbishop of York, in his sermon adverted to this circumstance, and expressed much surprise at it, as she was born an alien. The prelate added, that she had sent to him, for his inspection and judgment, her four English translations of the gospel, and that he had found them true and faithful. He confessed, that it appeared to him a marvellous instance of godliness, that so great a lady would humbly condescend to study such excellent books: and he completed his encomium by declaring that he never knew a woman of such extraordinary piety. In the same sermon, he sharply rebuked the negligence of bishops and of others.

This relation may probably induce the reader to conjecture that Arundel himself must have been almost a lollard. At least he cannot but be both surprised and mortified to find, that shortly after the death of the good queen Anne, this same prelate, to the utmost of his power, stirred up the king to harass, throughout the whole kingdom, the very persons who should dare, in their native language to read and study the gospels of Jesus Christ.

Such inconsistencies are not uncommon in the annals of human nature.

About the same time, I find that several persons, who were accused of holding those speculative tenets of Wickliff, which I have allowed to be indefensible, did however, in their examinations, perfectly clear themselves of every reasonable suspicion of factious innovation.† In fact, the whole body of the lollards

* Fox, p. 578. † Fox, p. 499, &c.

in general were, in practice, so perfectly void of offence, that speculative errors formed the only charge that could be brought against them; and, even in regard to these errors, there seems reason to apprehend that the followers of Wickliff very much meliorated the sentiments of their master and leader. ONLY for the gospel's sake they suffered; whatever might be the pretences of their enemies.

In the year 1397 died, John De Trevisa, a gentleman born at Crocadon in Cornwall; a secular priest, and vicar of Berkeley; a man, who translated many voluminous writings, and particularly the bible in the English language. Thomas, lord Berkeley, his patron, induced him to undertake the last mentioned work. This nobleman appears to have had a regard for the written word of God, which was little read or known in that age. He had the apocalypse, in Latin and French, inscribed on the walls of his chapel at Berkeley. Trevisa was, also, distinguished for his aversion to the monastic system. "Christ," said he, "sent apostles and presbyters, not monks and mendicant friars." He died in peace, almost ninety years old. Though neither this clergyman nor his patron are usually ranked among lollards, yet do they seem to be sufficiently distinguished by their piety and veneration for the scriptures to deserve a place in these memoirs. The period of history we are reviewing, is not so fruitful in godliness as to require us to pass over in silence such examples as these.*

Richard II. being deposed, Henry of Lancaster, the son of that same John of Gaunt, who had patronised Wickliff, usurped the throne in the year 1399; and, shortly after, was crowned by Arundel, then archbishop of Canterbury. Both the king and the archbishop had demonstrated by their conduct, that they were ready to sacrifice every thing to their ambition. It is not therefore matter of surprise, either that the murderer of king Richard should proceed to perse-

* Fuller's Church History, p. 151.

cute, with extreme barbarity, the lollards, whom his father had so zealously protected; or, that the archbishop, who had supported the usurper in his iniquitous pretensions to the crown, should also concur with him in his plan to crush those reformers. The power of the hierarchy was formidable to all men; and every one, who thirsted after secular greatness, found himself obliged, by political necessity, which is the primary law of unprincipled men, to court that power, and to obey its most unreasonable commands. Thus influenced, Henry IV. and Arundel commenced a persecution more terrible than any, which had ever been known under the English kings. William Sawtre was the first man who was burnt in England for opposing the abominations of popery. He was a clergyman in London, who openly taught the doctrines of Wickliff. And, though, through the weakness of human nature, he had revoked and abjured those docrines before the bishop of Norwich, he afterwards recovered so much strength of mind, as to incur a second prosecution for his open confession of evangelical truth before the archbishop. Among other charges, which it would be tedious to recount, this was one; "he had declared, that a priest was more bound to preach the word of God, than to recite particular services at certain canonical hours."* Such was the genius of the reigning superstition! The exposition of the word of God was looked on as a small matter, in comparison of the customary formalities. Sawtre, glorying in the cross of Christ, and strengthened by divine grace, suffered the flames of martyrdom in the year of our Lord, fourteen hundred.†

The name of John Badby, a low and illiterate workman, well deserves to be recorded for the honour of divine truth. Arundel took serious pains to persuade him, that the consecrated bread was really and properly the body of Christ. "After the consecration,

* Fox, page 587. † Wilkins, Convoc. page 254—260.

it remaineth,"* said Badby, "the same material bread, which it was before; nevertheless it is a sign, or sacrament of the living God. I believe the omnipotent God in trinity to be ONE. But if every consecrated host be the Lord's body, then there are twenty thousand gods in England." After he had been delivered to the secular power by the bishops, he was, by the king's writ, condemned to be burned. The prince of Wales, happening to be present, very earnestly exhorted him to recant, adding the most terrible menaces, of the vengeance, which would overtake him, if he should continue in his obstinacy. Badby, however, was inflexible. As soon as he felt the fire, he cried, Mercy! The prince, supposing that he was intreating the mercy of his judges, ordered the fire to be quenched. "Will you forsake heresy," said young Henry; "and will you conform to the faith of the holy church? If you will, you shall have a yearly stipend out of the king's treasury." The martyr was unmoved; and Henry, in a rage, declared, that he might now look for no favour. Badby gloriously finished his course in the flames.

It was a marvellous instance of the strength of Christ made perfect in weakness, and a striking proof that God hath chosen the good things of the world to confound the wise, that a simple artificer should sustain the most cruel torments with patience and serenity, not only in defence of divine truth, but also of common sense; while the most dignified characters in the kingdom, and among these, the prince of Wales, afterwards the renowned Henry V. gloried in defending one of the most egregious absurdities that ever disgraced the human understanding. What are all HIS victories and triumphs, of which English history is so proud, compared with the grace which appeared in Badby? The man suffered in the year 1409.

The conflict was now grown serious, and it behooved Henry to exercise the most rigorous measures of prevention, if he intended to repress all in-

* Fox, page 594, and Wilkins, page 326.

novation, and to protect the established ecclesiastical system. Accordingly, he published a severe statute, by which grievous pains and penalties were to be inflicted on all, who should dare to defend or encourage the tenets of Wickliff; and this, in conjunction with a constitution of Arundel, too tedious* to be recited, seemed to threaten the total extinction of the heresy so called. The persecutors were extremely active, and many persons through fear recanted; but worthies were still found, who continued faithful unto death.

In the year 1413 died Henry IV. His successor Henry V. trode in his steps, and countenanced Arundel, in his plans of extirpating the lollards, and of supporting the existing hierarchy by penal coercions. In the first year of the new king's reign, this archbishop collected in St. Paul's Church at London, a universal synod of all the bishops and clergy of England. The principal object of the assembly was to repress the growing sect; and, as sir John Oldcastle, lord Cobham, had on all occasions discovered a partiality for these reformers, the resentment of the archbishop and of the whole body of the clergy, were particularly levelled at this nobleman. Certainly at that time, no man in England was more obnoxious to the ecclesiastics. For he made no secret of his opinions. He had very much distinguished himself in opposing the abuses of popery. At a great expense, he had collected, transcribed, and dispersed the works of Wickliff among the common people without reserve; and it was well known that he maintained a great number of itinerant preachers in many parts of the country, particularly in the dioceses of Canterbury, Rochester, London, and Hereford.†

But lord Cobham was a favourite both of the king and of the people; and therefore to effect his destruction was an undertaking that required much caution.

* Wilkins, p. 314. Constit. Arundel ex M. S. Lamb.
† Fox, p. 635. Walden contra Wiclev. Goodwin's Henry V

The archbishop however was in earnest, and he concerted his measures with prudence.

His first step was to procure the royal mandate for sending commissioners to Oxford, whose business it should be to examine and report the progress of heresy. These commissioners are, by Mr. Fox, not improperly called, "the twelve inquisitors of heresies." The issue of their inquiries proved highly ungrateful to the hierarchy. They found Oxford overrun with heretics: they were, indeed, respectfully received by the rulers of the university, but the opinions of Wickliff had made their way among the junior students; and the talents and integrity of their master were held in high esteem and admiration by his disciples. This information, with many other minute particulars, Arundel laid before the grand convocation, who, after long debates, determined that, without delay, the lord Cobham should be prosecuted as a heretic. Him they considered as the great offender: to his influence they ascribed the growth of heresy: he was not only, they said, an avowed heretic himself; but, by stipends encouraged scholars from Oxford, to propagate his opinions, many of which were in direct opposition to the sentiments of the holy church of Rome; and lastly, he employed the disciples of Wickliff in preaching, though they had not obtained the licences of their respective bishops for that purpose. With great solemnity, a copy of each of Wickliff's works was publicly burnt, by the enraged archbishop, in the presence of the nobility, clergy, and people; and it happened that one of the books burnt on this occasion, had belonged to lord Cobham. This circumstance tended much to confirm the assembly in their belief, that that nobleman was a great encourager of the lollards.*

At the moment when the convocation seemed almost in a flame, and were vowing vengeance against lord Cobham, some of the more cool and discreet members are said to have suggested the propriety of

* Fox, page 636. Collier, page 632. Wilkins Concilia, page 352.

sounding how the young king would relish the measures they had in view, before they should proceed any further. Arundel instantly saw the wisdom of this advice, and he resolved to follow it.

For the purpose of giving weight to his proceedings, this artful primate, at the head of a great number of dignified ecclesiastics, complained most grievously to Henry, of the heretical practices of his favorite servant lord Cobham, and intreated his majesty to consent to the prosecution of so incorrigible an offender.

The affections of the king appear to have been, in some measure, already alienated from this unfortunate nobleman: Mr. Fox observes,* that he gently listened to those "blood thirsty prelates, and far otherwise than became his princely dignity." But there is a circumstance, which seems to have escaped the notice of this diligent searcher into ancient records. Through the management of the archbishop, the king's mind was previously impressed with strong suspicions of lord Cobham's heresy and enmity to the church. That very book above mentioned, which was said to belong to this excellent man, and which the convocation condemned to the flames, was read aloud before the king, the bishops and the temporal peers of the realm: and the fragment of the account of these proceedings informs us, that Henry was exceedingly shocked at the recital; and declared that, in his life, he never heard such horrid heresy.† However, in consideration of the high birth, military rank, and good services of sir John Oldcastle, the king enjoined the convocation to deal favourably with him, and to desist from all further process for some days: he wished to restore him to the unity of the church without rigour or disgrace; and he promised, that he himself in the mean time, would send privately for the honourable knight, and endeavour to persuade him to renounce his errors.

* Fox, ibid.
† Fragmentum Convoc. Centuar. ARUNDEL.

The king kept his promise, and is said to have used every argument he could think of, to convince him of the high offence of separating from the church; and at last, to have pathetically exhorted him to retract and submit, as an obedient child to his holy mother. The answer of the knight is very expressive of the frank and open intrepidity which distinguished his character. "You I am always most ready to obey," said he, "because you are the appointed minister of God, and bear the sword for the punishment of evil doers. But, as to the pope and his spiritual dominion, I owe them no obedience, nor will I pay them any; for as sure as God's word is true, to me it is fully evident, that the pope of Rome is the great antichrist, foretold in holy writ, the son of perdition, the open adversary of God, and the abomination standing in the holy place." The extreme ignorance of Henry in matters of religion, by no means disposed him to relish such an answer as this: he immediately turned away from him in visible displeasure, and gave up the disciple of Wickliff to the malice of his enemies.*

Arundel, supported by the sovereign power, sent a citation to the castle of Cowling, where lord Cobham then resided. But feudal ideas were at that time no less fashionable than those of ecclesiastical domination. The high spirited nobleman availed himself of his privileges, and refused admission to the messenger. The archbishop then cited him,† by letters affixed to the great gates of the cathedral of Rochester; but lord Cobham still disregarded the mandate. Arundel, in a rage, excommunicated him for contumacy, and demanded the aid of the civil power to apprehend him.

Cobham, alarmed at length at the approaching storm, put in writing a confession of his faith, delivered it to the king, and intreated his majesty to judge for himself, whether he had merited all this rough

* Fox, ibid. Goodwin, Henry V.
† Citatio Arund. Wilkins, page 329.

treatment. The king coldly ordered the written confession to be delivered to the archbishop. Lord Cobham then offered to bring a hundred knights, who would bear testimony to the innocence of his life and opinions. When these expedients had failed, he assumed a higher strain, and begged that he might be permitted, as was usual in less matters, to vindicate his innocence by the law of arms. He said he was ready, " in the quarrel of his faith," to fight for life or death, with any man living, the king and the lords of his council being excepted.

Nothing can be said by way of extenuating so gross an absurdity, except that he had been educated in the military habits of the fourteenth century. And such was the wretched state of society in the reign of Henry V., whose history we are accustomed to read with so much pride and admiration, that no method of defence remained for this christian hero, but what was as contrary to all ideas of justice and equity, as that by which he was persecuted. In the issue, Cobham was arrested by the king's express order, and lodged in the tower of London. The very zealous and honest Mr. Fox,* gives the following account of his first examination.

On the day appointed, Thomas Arundel, the archbishop, " sitting in Caiaphas' room, in the chapter-house at St. Pauls" with the bishops of London and Winchester, sir Robert Morley brought personally before him lord Cobham, and left him there for the time. Sir, said the primate, you stand here, both detected of heresies, and also excommunicated for contumacy. Notwithstanding we have, as yet, neither shown ourselves unwilling to give you absolution, nor yet do to this hour, provided you would meekly ask for it.

Lord Cobham took no notice of this offer, but desired permission to read an account of his faith, which had long been settled, and which he intended

* Page 638 and 639.

to stand to. He then took out of his bosom a certain writing respecting the articles whereof he was accused, and when he had read it, he delivered the same to the archbishop.

The contents of the paper were, in substance, these:

1. That the most worshipful sacrament of the altar is Christ's body in the form of bread.

2. That every man, who would be saved, must forsake sin, and do penance for sins already committed, with true and very sincere contrition.

3. That images might be allowable to represent and give men lively ideas of the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the martyrdom and good lives of saints; but, that if any man gave that worship to dead images which was due only to God, or put such hope or trust in the help of them as he should do in God, he became a grievous idolater.

4. That the matter of pilgrimages might be settled in few words. A man may spend all his days in pilgrimages, and lose his soul at last: but he, that knows the holy commandments of God and keepeth them to the end, shall be saved, though he never visited the shrines of saints, as men now do in their pilgrimages to Canterbury, Rome, and other places.

Then the archbishop informed the prisoner, that, though there were many good things contained in his paper, he had not been sufficiently explicit respecting several other articles of belief; and that upon these also his opinion would be expected. As a direction to his faith, he promised to send him, in writing, the clear determinations of the church; and he warned him very particularly, to attend to this point; namely whether, in the sacrament of the altar, the material bread did, or did not, remain, after the words of consecration.

The gross superstition and unscriptural notions of the church at that time, are strikingly exhibited in this authentic determination of the primate and clergy.

which, according to promise, was sent to the lord Cobham in the tower.

1. The faith and determination of the holy church, touching the blissful sacrament of the altar is this, that after the sacramental words be once spoken, by a priest in his mass, "the material bread, that was before bread, is turned into Christ's very body; and the material wine, that was before wine, is turned into Christ's very blood." And so there remaineth, thenceforth, neither material bread, nor material wine, which were there before the sacramental words were spoken.

2. Every christian man living here bodily on earth, ought to confess to a priest ordained by the church if he can come to him.

3. Christ ordained St. Peter to be his vicar here on earth, whose see is the holy church of Rome: And he granted that the same power, which he gave to Peter, should succeed to all Peter's successors; whom we now call popes of Rome.....and whom christian men ought to obey, after the laws of the church of Rome.

4. Lastly, holy church had determined, that it is meritorious to a christian man to go on a pilgrimage to holy places; and there to worship holy reliques, and images of saints, apostles, martyrs, and confessors, approved by the church of Rome.

On Monday, the day appointed for the next examination, Arundel accosted lord Cobham with an appearance of great mildness, and put him in mind that, on the preceding Saturday, he had informed him, he was, "accursed for contumacy and disobedience to the holy church;" and had expected he would at that time have meekly requested absolution. The archbishop then declared, that even now it was not too late to make the same request, provided it was made in due form, as the church had ordained.*

Amidst this very interesting narrative, let not my reader for a moment forget, that his historian is always

* Fox, ibid. Wilkins, p. 356.

in quest of evidences of the true faith of the gospel, exemplified in practice. The trial of lord Cobham, though in many points of view, a gloomy tale, affords a remarkable and a very satisfactory evidence of this sort. This exemplary knight appears to have possessed the humility of a christian, as well as the spirit of a soldier: for, he not only faithfully protested against the idolatry of the times, the fictitious absolutions, and various corruptions of popery, by which the creatures of the pope extorted the greatest part of the wealth of the kingdom; but, he also openly made such penitential declarations, and affecting acknowledgments of having personally broken God's commandments, as imply much salutary selfknowledge and selfabasement, strong convictions of sin, and bitter sorrow for the same, together with a firm reliance on the mercy of God through the mediation of Jesus Christ.

" I never yet trespassed against YOU, said this intrepid servant of God; and therefore I do not feel the want of YOUR absolution." He then kneeled down on the pavement; and lifting up his hands to heaven, he said, " I confess myself here unto thee, my eternal living God, that I have been a grievous sinner. How often in my frail youth have I offended thee by ungoverned passions, pride, concupiscence, intemperance! How often have I been drawn into horrible sin by anger, and how many of my fellow creatures have I injured from this cause? Good Lord, I humbly ask thee mercy: here I need absolution."

With tears in his eyes, he then stood up, and with a loud voice cried out, " Lo! these are your guides, good people. Take notice; for the violation of God's holy law and his great commandments they never cursed me: but, for their own arbitrary appointments and traditions, they most cruelly treat me and other men. Let them, however, remember, that Christ's denunciations against the pharisees, shall all be fulfilled."

The dignity of his manner, and the vehemence of his expression, threw the court into some confusion.

After the primate had recovered himself, he proceeded to examine the prisoner respecting the doctrine of transubstantiation.* " Do you believe, that after the words of consecration, there remains any MATERIAL bread?" " The scriptures, said Cobham, make no mention of MATERIAL bread; I believe, that Christ's body remains in the FORM of bread. In the sacrament there is both Christ's body and the bread: the bread is the thing that we see with our eyes; but the body of Christ is hid, and only to be seen by faith." Upon which, with one voice, they cried Heresy! Heresy! One of the bishops in particular said vehemently, " That it was a foul heresy to call it bread." Cobham answered smartly, " St. Paul, the apostle, was as wise a man as you, and perhaps as good a christian; and yet he calls it BREAD. The bread, saith he, that we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? To be short with you; I believe the scriptures most cordially, but I have no belief in your lordly laws and idle determinations: ye are no part of Christ's holy church, as your deeds do plainly show." Doctor Walden, the prior of the Carmelites, and Wickliff's great enemy, now lost all patience; and exclaimed, " What rash and desperate people are these followers of Wickliff!"

Before God and man, replied Cobham, I solemnly here profess, that till I knew Wickliff, whose judgment ye so highly disdain, I never abstained from sin; but after I became acquainted with that virtuous man and his despised doctrines, it hath been otherwise with me; so much grace could I never find in all your pompous instructions."

" It were hard," said Walden, " that in an age of so many learned instructors, you should have had no grace to amend your life, till you heard the devil preach."

" Your fathers," said Cobham, " the old pharisees, ascribed Christ's miracles to Beelzebub, and his doctrines to the devil. Go on, and like them ascribe every

* The learned reader cannot fail to observe, that both Wickliff and his followers, seem sometimes to lean to the notion of consubstantiation.

good thing to the devil. Go on, and pronounce every man a heretic, who rebukes your vicious lives. Pray, what warrant have you from scripture for this very act you are now about? Where is it written in all God's law that you may thus sit in judgment upon the life of man? Hold! perhaps you will quote Annas and Caiaphas, who sat upon Christ and his apostles!"

"Yes, sir," said one of the doctors of law, "and Christ too, for he judged JUDAS."

"I never heard that he did," said lord Cobham. "Judas judged himself, and thereupon went out and hanged himself. Indeed Christ pronounced a wo against him, for his covetousness, as he does still against you, who follow Judas' steps."

The examinations of lord Cobham are unmeasurably prolix. I have, therefore, chosen to select such passages from the tedious accounts,* as might best indicate the real dispositions of this DEFENDER OF THE FAITH. Though intrepid and high spirited to the last, he appears not to have given his enemies any advantage over him, by using rude and coarse language, or by bursts of passion. The proud and ferocious spirit of an ill educated soldier seems to have been melted down into the meekness and humility of the christian. His reproof of his judges was severe, but perfectly just. His deep and animated confession of his sins is both affecting and instructive; and his bold testimony, in those trying moments, to the virtues and excellencies of a character so obnoxious to his ecclesiastical judges as that of Wickliff, is exceedingly honourable to the memory both of the master and the scholar. I need not add, the same testimony covers their cruel and relentless adversaries with shame and disgrace.

We have seen, that lord Cobham, in the process of his trial, hinted at the lessons of divine grace, which he had learnt in the school of Wickliff. The intimation

* I generally give the very words; though sometimes, for the sake of brevity, only the substance: and sometimes I put a modern phrase in the place of one now antiquated.

is by no means obscure; yet every pious reader, at the same time that he is delighted with finding this evidence of the sound christianity of Cobham, will lament with me, that there is not, on record, a larger and more distinct account both of his conversion and of his private life and conversation. Such an account would give us a clearer insight into the religious character of this disciple of Wickliff, and might probably throw more light also on the practical tenets of that early reformer.

But we must be thankful for the documents we have. That distinct and impressive declaration of lord Cobham, concerning the change in his life from sin to the service of the living God, when we reflect on the awful and peculiar circumstances in which it was made, is in itself an inestimable fragment of ecclesiastical biography. This is that testimony of experience, which invincibly confirms every real christian in the belief of the truth of the doctrine, which he has been taught. He may be baffled in argument by men more acute and sagacious than himself; he may be erroneous in many less matters; he may want both learning and eloquence to defend that which he believes; but the doctrines of grace he knows to be of God, by the change which they have wrought in his soul. In this proof he knows all other views of religion, whether nominally christian or not, do totally fail.

At the conclusion of this long and iniquitous trial, the behaviour of lord Cobham was perfectly consistent with the temper he had exhibited during the course of it. There remained the same undaunted courage and resolution, and the same christian serenity and resignation. Some of the last questions which were put to him, respected the worship of the CROSS; and his answers prove that neither the acuteness of his genius was blunted, nor the solidity of his judgment impaired.

One of the friars asked him, whether he was ready to worship the cross upon which Christ died.

Where is it, said lord Cobham?

But suppose it was here at this moment? said the friar?

A wise man indeed, said Cobham, to put me such a question; and yet he himself does not know where the thing is! But, tell me, I pray, what sort of worship do I owe to it?

One of the conclave answered; such worship as St. Paul speaks of, when he says, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Right, replied Cobham, and stretched out his arms, THAT is the true and the very cross; far better than your cross of wood.

Sir, said the bishop of London, you know very well that Christ died upon a MATERIAL cross.

True, said Cobham; and I know also that our salvation did not come by that material cross; but by him who died thereupon. Further, I know well that St. Paul rejoiced in no other cross, but in Christ's passion and death ONLY, and in his own sufferings and persecutions, for the same truth which Christ had died for before.*

Mr. Fox's account of these transactions, collected from ancient manuscripts, does not, in general, differ materially from the archbishop's own registers of the proceedings of the convocation. But there are some circumstances noted by Mr. Fox, which we may well suppose to have been designedly omitted in the registers last mentioned. For example, Mr. Fox informs us that the court were so amazed at the spirit and resolution of the lord Cobham, as well as at the quickness and pertinence of his answers, that they were reduced to a stand, "their wits and sophistry so failed them that day."

From Arundel's own reports it is sufficiently clear, that it was the custom of that artful primate to make, on these occasions, a great external show of lenity and kindness to the prisoners, at the very moment in which

* Fox, p. 642. Convoc. prælat. Wilkins, p. 356

he was exercising towards them the most unrelenting barbarity. I observe in the case of William Sawtre, whose martyrdom we have already concisely related,* that when the archbishop degraded that faithful clergyman, pronounced him an incorrigible heretic, and delivered him to the secular power, he then, with the most consummate hypocrisy, requested the mayor and sheriffs of London, to treat their prisoner KINDLY,† though he well knew they would dare to show him no other kindness, than that of burning him to ashes.

So in the trial of lord Cobham, nothing could exceed the mild and affable deportment of Arundel during the course of the examinations. The registers of Lambeth palace informs us, that the archbishop repeatedly made use of the most "gentle, modest, and sweet terms" in addressing the prisoner; that with mournful looks he intreated him to return into the bosom of the church; and that after he had found all his endeavours in vain, he was compelled with the bitterest sorrow to proceed to a definitive sentence.

"The day," said Arundel, "passes away fast, we must come to a conclusion." He then, for the last time, desired lord Cobham, to weigh well the dilemma in which he stood: "You must either submit," said he, "to the ordinances of the church, or abide the dangerous consequences."

Lord Cobham then said expressly before the whole court, "My faith is fixed—do with me what you please."

The primate, without further delay, judged, and pronounced, sir John Oldcastle, the lord Cobham, to be an incorrigible, pernicious, and detestable, heretic; and having condemned him as such, he delivered him to the secular jurisdiction.‡

Lord Cobham, with a most cheerful countenance,

* Page 140 of this vol.
† Wilkin's Concil. p. 260. Fox, p. 589.
‡ Rymer, vol. ix. p. 61—66. Fox, p. 642 and 3.

said, "Though ye condemn my body which is but a wretched thing, yet I am well assured ye can do no harm to my soul, any more than could Satan to the soul of Job. He, that created it, will of his infinite mercy save it. Of this I have no manner of doubt. And in regard to the articles of my belief, I will stand to them, even to my very death, BY THE GRACE OF THE ETERNAL GOD." He then turned to the people, and stretching out his hands, cried with a very loud voice, "Good christian people! for God's love, be well aware of these men; else, they will beguile you, and lead you blindfold into hell with themselves." Having said these words, he fell down upon his knees, and lifting up his hands and eyes to heaven, he prayed for his enemies in the following words, "Lord God Eternal! I beseech thee of thy great mercy to forgive my persecutors, if it be thy blessed will!"

He was then sent back to the tower under the care of sir Robert Morley.

I was not surprised to find that, in Arundel's own report of this sad transaction, lord Cobham's prayer for his enemies is entirely omitted.* But the preceding address of this nobleman to the people, and his caution to them to beware of their blind guides, is, by the primate, placed immediately BEFORE the passing of the definitive sentence of condemnation. Mr. Fox, in his account, places that address immediately AFTER the sentence, and seems to have thought Arundel's representation of this circumstance incorrect, for he pointedly tells us that, respecting this very matter, his own two copies of these proceedings agreed with each other.†

Though the ecclesiastical judges of lord Cobham, by condemning him as a heretic, and delivering him to the secular power for the execution of their sentence, appear to have done their utmost to complete the destruction of the man whom they feared and hated, there

* Acta Convoc. prov. Cantuar. Arundel, 18. † Fox, p. 643.

is yet reason to believe that both the king and the archbishop remained in some perplexity respecting this business. In religious concerns, this able monarch seems to have entirely resigned his understanding to the direction of the clergy; and therefore we need not wonder that he was highly provoked with lord Cobham for his opposition to the church, and still more for his incurable obstinacy, in adhering to heretical sentiments, after that his sovereign had personally condescended to persuade him to recant. Yet, after all, it is not improbable that such a prince as Henry V. should still retain some esteem for the character of the prisoner in the tower, who on many occasions had formerly distinguished himself by his valour and military talents. Though the memory of Henry is by no means free from the imputation of cruelty, it must at least be admitted, that the present situation of Cobham was likely to soften animosity, and to revive in the king's mind any latent affection for his favourite. Even Walsingham, a bigoted papist, and bitter enemy of the lollards, though in many respects a very useful historian, says, that Cobham, "for his integrity, was dearly beloved by the king."*

This same ancient historian informs us, that the archbishop in person went to the king and requested his majesty to postpone, for the space of fifty days, the punishment of lord Cobham.† If this be true, the motives of Arundel can be no great mystery. The persecution of this virtuous knight was a most unpopular step. His rank and character, and his zeal for the doctrines of Wickliff, had pointed him out to the primate as a proper victim of ecclesiastical severity; but his condemnation involved, in a general odium, the rulers of the church who had been his judges. It was necessary therefore to temporize a little; and before the whole sect of the lollards were to be terrified by the public execution of a person so highly esteemed

* Regi propter probitatem charus et acceptus. Walsingham, Henry V.
† Page 385.

as lord Cobham, it was thought expedient to employ a few weeks in lessening his credit among the people by a variety of scandalous aspersions. Mr. Fox assures us, that his adversaries scrupled not to publish a recantation in his name; and that lord Cobham directed a paper to be posted up in his own defence, and in contradiction to the slander.

But, whether the lenity of the king, or the politic caution of the clergy, was the true cause of the delay, it is certain, that lord Cobham was not put to death immediately after being condemned for a heretic. He remained some weeks in the tower, and at length by unknown means made his escape: so that it is now impossible to say, whether the clergy would ultimately have pressed the sovereign to proceed to extremities in this instance, or, whether Henry could have been induced to commit to the flames, for heresy, a favourite of such exalted rank and high reputation. For as yet, there had not been any instance of a nobleman suffering in that ignominious manner.

After lord Cobham had escaped out of the tower, he is said to have taken the advantage of a dark night, evaded pursuit, and arrived safe in Wales, where he concealed himself more than four years.* If he had remained in prison, he would have effectually prevented the calumny, with which the papists have endeavoured to load his memory; nevertheless, when we reflect on the intrepid spirit of the man, his unshaken resolution, and the cruel, unjust treatment he met with, we cannot wonder at his eagerness to fly from those flames, which his persecutors ardently longed to kindle. It seems as easy to comprehend lord Cobham's motives for wishing to escape, as it is difficult to censure them.

The clergy were not a little mortified to find, that this grand heretic and destined victim, had slipped out of their hands; and their uneasiness was increased, by observing that the king discovered no anxiety to have

* Bale. Gilpin.

lord Cobham retaken. Soon after this event, however, a very remarkable transaction afforded them every advantage they could wish to gratify their resentment against the NOBLE CHIEF of the lollards. These peaceable and truly christian subjects had been accustomed to assemble in companies for the purposes of devotion; but the bishops represented their meetings as of a seditious tendency, and they found no great difficulty in obtaining a royal proclamation* for suppressing the conventicles of persons who were supposed to be ill inclined to the government. Historians have observed that "jealousy was the ruling foible of the house of Lancaster;" and though Henry V. was, naturally, of a noble and magnanimous temper, he could never forget that he was an usurper. His suspicions of the evil designs of the lollards increased to a high degree: he thought it necessary to watch them as his greatest enemies; and he appears to have listened to every calumny, which the zeal and hatred of the hierarchy could invent or propagate against the unfortunate followers of Wickliff.

The royal proclamation, however, did not put an end to the assemblies of the lollards. Like the primitive christians, they met in SMALLER companies, and more privately, and often in the dead of night. St. Giles's fields, then a thicket, was a place of frequent resort on these occasions. And here a number of them assembled in the evening of January the 6th, 1414; with an intention, as was usual, of continuing together to a very late hour.

The king was then at Eltham, a few miles from London. He received intelligence, that lord Cobham, at the head of twenty thousand of his party, was stationed in St. Giles's fields, for the purpose of seizing the person of the king, putting their persecutors to the sword, and making himself the regent of the realm.

The mind of Henry, we have seen, had been prepared, by the diligent and artful representations of the clergy, to receive any impressions against the lollards,

* Rymer, vol. ix.

which might tend to fix upon that persecuted sect the charges of seditious or treasonable practices. To his previous suspicions, therefore, as well as to the gallantry of his temper, we are to ascribe the extraordinary resolution, which the king took on this occasion. He suddenly armed the few soldiers he could muster, put himself at their head, and marched to the place. He attacked the lollards, and soon put them into confusion. About twenty were killed, and sixty taken.* Among these was one Beverley, their preacher, who with two others, sir Roger Action, and John Brown, was afterwards put to death. The king marched on, but found no more bodies of men. He thought he had surprised only the advanced guard, whereas he had routed the whole army!

This extraordinary affair is represented by the popish writers as a real conspiracy; and it has given them occasion to talk loudly against the tenets of the reformers, which could encourage such crimes. Mr. Hume, also, has enlisted himself on the same side of the question; and, in the most peremptory and decisive manner, has pronounced lord Cobham guilty of high treason.†

After what has been so lately observed concerning the lamentable prejudices of this most valuable historian, little more can now be necessary, than barely to put the reader in mind, that Cobham and many of the lollards evidently belonged to the true church of Christ, and bore with patience the cross of their master. We may briefly add, that the ingenious, and on many occasions, the sceptical Mr. Hume, instead of affirming that "the treasonable designs of the sect were rendered certain both from evidence, and from the confession of the criminals themselves," would have done better to have recollected that the testimony of Walsingham, a violent partisan, merits, in this particular instance, very little attention. When I had reviewed Mr. Fox's able and satisfactory vindication of

* Rapin, Henry V † Hume, Henry V.

lord Cobham, I was astonished at the positiveness of our elegant historian Mr. Hume, in this matter. The martyrologist, with great diligence and judgment, has examined all the authentic documents, and argued most powerfully against the supposition of any conspiracy. Mr. Hume, on the contrary, gives implicit credit to the most improbable accounts;* and he could not but know that the lollards had not then a friend on earth.

Though the entire combination of church and state, in the reign of Henry V. against this religious sect, prevents us from being furnished with positive and direct proof of their innocence, the reader, after what has been stated, will be disposed, no doubt, to acquit them of all treasonable views in the affair of St. Giles's fields. And this persuasion will be strengthened by considering that this is the only instance on record, in which they have been accused of turbulent or seditious behaviour. The lollards are described, in general, as having been always peaceable and submissive to authority.

Rapin observes,† that the persons assembled on that occasion, "had unhappily brought arms with them for their defence, in case they should be attacked by their persecutors." If we regulate our judgments according to modern notions and habits, this circumstance must appear very suspicious; not so, if we recollect that the practice of providing arms for the purpose of selfdefence, was by no means an unusual precaution in those violent times.

Neither ought much stress to be laid on the confession of several, who were made prisoners by the king. Among those that were taken, says the historian last-mentioned, there were some, who, "gained by promises, or awed by threats, confessed whatever their enemies desired." Besides, it is extremely probable, that popish emissaries mixed themselves among the lollards, for the express purpose of being brought to

* Such are the accounts of Hall, &c. † History of England, Henry V.

confession; and it has been well observed, that most likely, the very persons, who pretended to find arms on the field, could have best pointed out the original concealers of them.

Nothing can be more judicious than Rapin's observations on this whole transaction. "It is hardly to be conceived," says this historian, "that a prince so wise as Henry, could suffer himself to be imposed on by so gross a fiction. Had he found, indeed, as he was made to believe, twenty thousand men in arms in St. Giles's fields, it would have been very suspicious; but, that fourscore or a hundred men, among whom there was not a single person of rank, should have formed such a project, is extremely improbable. Besides he himself knew sir John Oldcastle to be a man of sense; and yet nothing could be more wild than the project fathered upon him; a project, which it was supposed he was to execute with a handful of men, without being present himself, and without its being known where he was, or that there was any other leader in his room. Notwithstanding the strictest search made through the kingdom to discover the accomplices of this pretended conspiracy, not a SINGLE person could be found besides those taken at St. Giles's. Lastly, the principles of the lollards were very far from allowing such barbarities. It is therefore more than probable, that the accusation was forged, to render the lollards odious to the king, with a view to gain his licence for their persecution."

The conduct of those in power in the church at that time was so completely flagitious and unprincipled, that it is impossible to review their usual mode of proceeding against those, whom they termed heretics, without entertaining suspicions similar to those, which have occurred to Rapin; suspicions of forged accusations and of pretended or extorted confessions. This consideration adds much weight to the solid reasonings of this very candid and upright historian.

It has been supposed that, in process of time, the king disbelieved the report of any actual conspiracy,

in this transaction: and it must be confessed, that when we reflect on the great understanding and military skill of this prince, it seems extraordinary, that he should not at the first have reflected, that the very marshalling of such a number of soldiers, and the furnishing of them with necessaries, could never have been managed with secrecy. He appears, however, to have given sufficient credit to the calumny to answer all the designs of the ecclesiastical rulers. He became thoroughly incensed against the lollards, and particularly against the lord Cobham. A bill of attainder against that unfortunate nobleman, passed the commons, through the royal influence:* the king set a price of a thousand marks upon his head, and promised a perpetual exemption from taxes to any town, that should secure him.†

It was to be expected that these strong measures, aided by the active zeal and unrelenting hatred of his enemies, should be effective to the discovery of lord Cobham; and, it is matter of some surprize, how he was able, for several years, to elude the vigilance of the many, who narrowly watched him. Wales was his asylum; and he is supposed to have frequently changed the scene of his retreat. Through the diligence of lord Powis, and his dependents, he was at length discovered and taken. It was on the tenth of October, 1413, that lord Cobham was, by Arundel, condemned as a heretic and sent to the tower: the affair of St. Giles's happened on the evening of the sixth of January, 1414; and it was not till nearly the end of the year, 1417, that this persecuted christian was apprehended and brought to London.

His fate was soon determined. He was dragged into St. Giles's fields with all the insult and barbarity of enraged superstition; and there, both as a traitor and a heretic, he was suspended alive in chains, upon a gallows, and burnt to death.

This excellent man, by a slight degree of dissimu-

* Gilpin. † Rapin. Rymer.

lation, might have softened his adversaries, and have escaped a troublesome persecution and a cruel death. But, sincerity is essential to a true servant of Jesus Christ; and lord Cobham died, as he had lived, in the faith and hope of the gospel; and bearing, to the end, a noble testimony to its genuine doctrines; and "choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season."*

One of lord Cobham's very great admirers has said, that the novelty of Wickliff's opinions first engaged his curiosity; that he examined them as a philosopher, and in the course of his examination became a christian. I know not upon what ground this is affirmed; but, it might be so; nevertheless I feel assured that if we had lord Cobham's own account of his conversion, this representation of the matter would appear, at least, very defective. Moreover, from the little which he did say, on his trial, respecting Wickliff's doctrines, and from the very feeling manner in which he appears to have delivered that little,† I think it extremely probable, that the preaching and expounding of the true gospel of Christ, by Wickliff and his disciples, had been the means of affecting the CONSCIENCE of this worthy personage, and of convincing him of sin. This has been found the usual way in which the spirit of God operates salutary changes on the minds of fallen creatures. The philosophical method has a plausible appearance, but fails in practice.

Lord Cobham is allowed to have been a man of learning: and his knowledge of the holy scriptures is incontestable. The aptness of his quotations, and his promptitude in producing scriptural arguments, were displayed in a very striking manner, through the whole course of his examination before the bishops. At the time when he was seized and made prisoner in Wales, Henry V. was making conquests in Normandy; and a parliament was then sitting in London, for the purpose of supplying the sovereign with money to carry on his wars. The records of that parliament inform

* Heb. xiv. 25. † Page 150, 1. of this vol.

us, that on the eighteenth of December, 1417, sir John Oldcastle was brought before the lords, and that he made no answer to the crimes laid to his charge.* No doubt he was thoroughly convinced, that all attempts to exculpate himself would be vain and fruitless. The clergy, during the last three or four years, had gained a complete ascendancy both in parliament and in the cabinet; Arundel died in 1414, and was succeeded by Chicheley, who soon showed himself to be a primate, both of more art and ability, and also of more zeal and courage than his predecessor. Ecclesiastical tyranny and superstition seemed now at their height; and it required much less sagacity than that of lord Cobham to see two things distinctly; 1st, that in the present circumstances any witnesses which he could produce would be overawed or disregarded amidst the imprecations of the priests and monks; and 2dly, that a close and cruel confederacy of power, prejudice and resentment, would be impenetrable to argument and eloquence.

It was now, therefore, become the duty of lord Cobham, patiently to resign himself to the will of his Maker, and to seek for comfort by meditations on the sacred scriptures. That he did so, I collect with no small satisfaction, from a single expression of the ancient memorialist, Walsingham, which does not appear to have been taken notice of by succeeding writers. This author informs us that, the prisoner was examined in the presence of the duke of Bedford, then regent of England; and being pressed closely to give answers respecting the insurrection in St. Giles's fields, and his other treasonable offences, his reply, after a short pause, was, "With me it is a very small thing, that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment:"† and then, says the scornful annalist, he again proceeded to PRATE IMPERTINENTLY.‡

* Cotton's Abridgment.

† 1 Cor. iv. 3d verse.

‡ Et iterum impertinenter garrulare cæpit, donec.....Walsingham. p. 400.

Yet this, the reader should remember, is the very author, on whose assertions principally, Mr. Hume grounded his belief, that lord Cobham was guilty of treason. We have before observed* that, on that question our elegant historian appears to have been credulous in the extreme; and, as he had no great taste for scriptural quotations, it is by no means improbable, that he also further agreed with Walsingham in blaming the prisoner for his "impertinent garrulity." Serious persons, however, who listen with reverence to the written word of God, will view the matter in a different light. That such a passage of scripture should have been actually quoted by lord Cobham, then in the power of enraged and merciless adversaries, seems to be extremely likely; and not the less so, because recorded by Walsingham, a violent and prejudiced enemy of all the lollards. In regard to the quotation itself, by suggesting the littleness and insignificance of all HUMAN judgments and determinations, in comparison of the DIVINE, it conveyed a wise and salutary admonition to the existing hierarchy, who, at that moment, were uncommonly inflated with dominion and "drunken with the blood of the saints:"† and at the same time, it must have produced in the minds of all, WHO HAD EARS TO HEAR, a strong conviction of this important truth, that the knight, who was thus persecuted for righteousness' sake, had made no rash choice in renouncing the love of the world, and thereby demonstrating that the love of the Father was in him.‡ Every pious christian will, I doubt not, accord with me in these ideas; and be gratified to find, that "MAN'S JUDGMENT," however severe and cruel, was "a very small thing," in lord Cobham's estimation; and that when all earthly supports must have failed, this martyr for the gospel of Christ, steadily fixed his eye on GOD'S JUDGMENT, and derived all his hope and comfort from that single source.

At the time of his execution, many persons of rank

* Page 159. † Rev. xvii. 6. ‡ John, ii. 15.

and distinction were present; and the ecclesiastics are said to have laboured to the utmost to prevent the people from praying for him. Lord Cobham, however, resigned himself to a painful and ignominious death " with the utmost bravery and most triumphant joy, exhorting the people to follow the instructions which God had given them in the scriptures; and to disclaim those false teachers, whose lives and conversation were so contrary to Christ and his religion."†

Henry Chicheley, now archbishop of Canterbury, continued at the head of that see, from February, 1414, to April 1443.‡ This man deserves to be called the firebrand of the age in which he lived. To subserve the purposes of his own pride and tyranny, he engaged king Henry in his famous contest with France, by which a prodigious carnage was made of the human race, and the most dreadful miseries were brought upon both kingdoms. But Henry was a soldier, and understood the art of war, though perfectly ignorant of religion; and that ardour of spirit, which, in youth, had spent itself in vicious excesses, was now employed, under the management of Chicheley, in desolating France, by one of the most unjust wars ever waged by ambition, and in furnishing for vulgar minds matter of declamation on the valour of the English nation. While this scene was carrying on in France, the archbishop at home, partly by exile, partly by forced abjurations, and partly by the flames, domineered over the lollards; and almost effaced the vestiges of godliness in the kingdom.

This was one of the most gloomy seasons, which the church ever experienced. The doctrines of Wickliff, indeed, had travelled into Bohemia; but, as we shall afterwards see, the fires of persecution were also lighted up in that country, at the same time that in England, no quarter was given to any professors of the pure religion of Christ. Even the duke of Bedford.

† Lewis's account of Wickliff's followers.
‡ Biograph. Britan. Henry's Hist. book v.

the brother of the king,* one of the wisest men of his age, thought it no dishonour to be the minister of Chicheley's cruelties. A chaplain of lord Cobham, through terror of punishment, was induced to recant his creed: the strictest search was made after lollards and their books; and while a few souls, dispersed through various parts, sighed in secret; and detesting the reigning idolatry, worshipped God in spirit and in truth, they yet found no HUMAN consolation or support whatever. The principal use to be made of these scenes is to excite a spirit of thankfulness for the superior privileges of the times in which we live.

The diocese of Kent, was particularly exposed to the bloody activity of Chicheley. Whole families were obliged to relinquish their places of abode, for the sake of the gospel.

In the midst of these tragedies, and in the year 1422, died Henry V. whose military greatness is known to most readers: his vast capacity and talents for government, have been also justly celebrated. But what is man without the genuine fear of God? This monarch, in the former part of his life, was remarkable for dissipation and extravagance of conduct; in the latter, he became the slave of the popedom; and, for that reason, was called the PRINCE OF PRIESTS. Voluptuousness, ambition, superstition, each in their turn, had the ascendant in this extraordinary character. Such, however, is the dazzling nature of personal bravery and of prosperity, that even the ignorance and folly of the bigot, and the barbarities of the persecutor, are lost or forgotten amidst the enterprises of the hero, and the successes of the conqueror. Reason and justice lift up their voice in vain. The great and substantial defects of Henry V. must hardly be touched on by Englishmen. The battle of Agincourt throws a delusive splendor around the name of this victorious king.

The persecution of the lollards continued during

* Fox, page 729.

the minority of Henry VI. William Taylor, a priest, was burnt, because he had asserted, that every prayer, which is a petition for some supernatural gift, is to be directed only to God.* The four orders of friars were directed by the archbishop to examine the man; and they convicted him of heresy for asserting a maxim, which peculiarly distinguishes true religion from idolatry. Not to dwell on the cases of many persons of less note, who suffered much vexation in this calamitous period of the church, it may be proper to mention William White, who, by reading, writing, and preaching,† exerted himself in Norfolk so vigorously, that he was condemned to the stake in 1424. His holy life and blameless manners had rendered him highly venerable in that country. He attempted to speak to the people before his execution, but was prevented. It is remarkable, that his widow, following her husband's footsteps in purity of life and in zeal for the gospel, confirmed many persons in evangelical truth; on which account she was exposed to much trouble from the bishop of Norwich.

Nor did the civil wars between the houses of York and Lancaster, which filled the whole kingdom with confusion, put an end to the persecution of the lollards. A person, named John Gooze, was burnt at the Towerhill, in the reign of Edward IV. in the year 1473.‡ This victim was delivered to one of the sheriffs with an order to have him executed in the afternoon. The officer, compassionating the case of his prisoner, took him to his own house, and endeavoured to prevail on him to retract. But the martyr, after listening to a long exhortation, desired him to forbear: and then, in strong terms, requested something to eat, declaring, he was become very hungry. The sheriff complied with his request. "I eat now a good dinner," said the man very cheerfully, "for I shall have a brisk storm to pass through before supper." After he had dined, he gave thanks to God,

* Fox, page 749. † Id. p. 752. ‡ Id. p. 814.

and desired to be led to the place, where he should give up his soul to his Creator and Redeemer.

The civil contests, with which the kingdom were convulsed, were at length terminated by the union of the two houses of York and Lancaster, at the accession of Henry VII. But the church of God continued still an unremitted object of persecution. The sufferings of the lollards were even greater during the established governments of Henry VII. and Henry VIII., than they had been during the civil wars. To give a minute detail of all the horrid cruelties, that were inflicted on those who were condemned as heretics for reading the scriptures, and for denying popish superstitions, is not the object of these memoirs. It may be sufficient to remark, that all, who were convicted of what was then called heresy, and adhered to their opinions, were first condemned as obstinate heretics, afterwards delivered to the secular arm, and lastly, burnt to ashes, without mercy, and without exception.* Neither age nor sex were spared. Mr. Fox has collected, from the registers of the diocese of Lincoln, for the year 1521, a most shocking catalogue, both of the victims and of their accusers, who suffered under the grievous and cruel persecution of bishop Langland, the king's confessor. He has also, with singular industry, recorded the particular names of many who, through fear of a painful death, renounced their faith during the memorable persecution of that same year. Upon these unfortunate persons, various penances, and many very severe and ignominious punishments were inflicted: several, who were found to have abjured before, were condemned for relapse and committed to the flames.

A concise account of a person named John Brown, of Ashford in Kent, shall conclude this distressing detail of the sufferings of the lollards.

This martyr suffered in the year 1511, under the persecution of William Warham, archbishop of Can-

* Henry's Hist. of Britain.

terbury. He was discovered to be a heretic as follows.* A slight altercation had taken place between him and a priest, as they were both passing down to Gravesend, in the common barge. The priest perceived symptoms of heresy; and immediately upon landing, lodged, with the archbishop, an information against Brown. The man was suddenly apprehended by two of the archbishop's servants, who, by means of assistants, placed him on his own horse, bound his feet under the horse's belly, and carried him to Canterbury, where he remained in confinement forty days; during which time neither his wife, nor any of his friends, could receive the smallest intimation concerning him.

At length he was brought to Ashford, the town where he lived, and placed in the stocks. It was now almost night; but, one of his own female domestics, in passing by the place, happened to become acquainted with his situation; and she instantly carried home to her mistress the afflicting news. His mournful wife sat near her husband all the night, and heard him relate the melancholy story of every thing that had happened to him. The treatment this good man had met with, from Warham, the archbishop of Canterbury and from Fisher,† bishop of Rochester, was infamous in the extreme. With unparalleled barbarity, they had directed his bare feet to be placed upon hot burn-

* Fox, p. 551.

† Fisher was born at Beverley in Yorkshire, in 1459. He was educated at Cambridge, and became master, or president of Queen's College in that university. He was made bishop of Rochester in 1504. It was during the time of his presidentship that Erasmus came to study at Cambridge, and took up his residence at Queen's College. This prelate was beheaded, by Henry VIII. in 1535, for denying the king's supremacy, and for speaking with freedom in behalf of the queen. The pope was so pleased with his conduct, that, even while Fisher was confined in the tower and attainted of high treason, he made him a cardinal, and sent him the proper hat belonging to that dignity. Henry was so much provoked, that he would not permit the hat to be brought into the kingdom: he also sent Cromwell to sound bishop Fisher, whether he intended to accept it. "Yes," said Fisher. The king then exclaimed with an oath, "Well; let the pope send him the hat when he pleases, he shall wear it on his shoulders, for I will leave him never a head to set it on." The tyrant was as good as his word. Erasmus speaks of Fisher in strong terms of commendation.

ing coals; and to be kept there, till they were burnt to the bones. Notwithstanding all this, Brown would not deny his faith, but patiently endured the pain, and continued immoveable, fighting manfully the "good fight." To his wife he then said, "The bishops, good Elizabeth, have burnt my feet, till I cannot set them on the ground: they have done so to make me deny my Lord; but, I thank God, they will never be able to make me do that; for, if I should deny HIM in this world, he would deny me hereafter. Therefore, I pray thee, continue, as thou hast begun, and bring up thy children in the fear of God. Thy husband is to be consumed at the stake to-morrow."

He was burnt, on Whitsuneven, lifting up his hands, and uttering the most fervent prayers, particularly the words of the psalmist, "Into thy hands I commend my spirit; for thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, thou God of truth."*

Such were the sanguinary methods by which the prelates of England attempted to extirpate lollardism and heresy. And they so far succeeded, that the few disciples of Wickliff, who still remained alive, seem to have been afterwards confounded with the favourers of the GRAND REFORMATION: but, in their main object of strengthening the roman catholic religion, they utterly failed. The burning of heretics was found to be not the way to extinguish heresy. On the contrary, both in England and on the continent, such detestable cruelty increased the compassion of the people for the sufferers, excited their indignation against the persecutors, and roused a spirit of inquiry and of opposition to the existing hierarchy, which at length, under the direction of a kind, overruling providence, proved fatal both to papal corruptions of sound doctrine, and also to papal usurpation of dominion.

When the human mind has been thus fatigued and disgusted with a review of the cruelties of popish per-

* Mr Fox tells us, he had this account from Brown's own daughter.

secutors, it is disposed to pronounce the Roman religion wholly a pretence, and all the ecclesiastical judges and rulers of those times, barbarous hypocrites and deceivers. "It is impossible," we are apt to say, "but that natural conscience should have informed them they were doing wrong, in committing to the flames, for slight differences of opinion, so many innocent victims; nay, often, persons of the most exemplary life and conversation." However,

A more cool and sedate reflection may convince us, that though, in all ages, there have existed wicked men of great ability, who have shown themselves ever ready to sacrifice principle and conscience to their ambition and avarice, and even to wade through much blood in support of their darling objects, yet ALL tormenters of the human race have not been precisely of this class. These are of the first magnitude, and we suppose them to have had their eyes open. But there are others, who knew not what they did;* and towards such therefore, though we are never to defend their faults, much less to palliate their enormities, yet are we bound to exercise an equitable discrimination. The reader will understand me to have in view, those deluded votaries, who have had the misfortune to be taught, and the weakness to believe, that the favour of God is to be obtained, chiefly by paying a scrupulous regard to external forms and observances. The following remarkable paragraph is extracted from a popish writer;† and will serve to explain my meaning still further.

"The disciples of Wickliff are men of a serious, modest deportment; avoiding all ostentation in dress, mixing little with the busy world, and complaining of the debauchery of mankind. They maintain themselves wholly by their own labour, and utterly despise wealth; being fully content with bare necessaries. They are chaste and temperate; are never seen in taverns, or amused by the trifling gaieties of life.

* Luke, xxiii. 34. † Reinher. quoted by Gilpin.

Yet you find them always employed; either learning or teaching. They are concise and devout in their prayers; blaming an unanimated prolixity. They never swear; speak little; and in their public preaching, they lay the chief stress on charity." This passage is not produced as a proof of the candour of a roman catholic, but of his wretched standard of virtue and holiness. For these excellencies of character in the followers of Wickliff are not here mentioned by the author in terms of approbation, but, on the contrary, are with great simplicity noted by him, as the distinguishing marks of a heretical people. So little, in the times of Wickliff and his followers, had the prevailing religion to do with morals and with the heart.

Though this and many other similar testimonies, which might be adduced, from popish authors, in proof of the innocence and virtues of the heretics, may satisfy us, that by no means all the persecutors of the godly, were deceivers and hypocrites in the gross sense of those terms, yet we must remember, as indeed has already been intimated, that the distinctions we would establish, still only serve to show that the sufferings of the righteous, during the period we are reviewing, are, probably, to be ascribed to very different degrees of guilt and wickedness in the hearts of those, who inflicted those sufferings. Far be it from us to pretend to exculpate, in the smallest degree, the perpetrators of any of the various and horrid crimes related in this chapter. Rather let St. Peter's example direct our judgments. That apostle thought it right to suggest to the Jews, that their case would have been worse, if, what they did, had not been done in ignorance, yet, he in nowise excuses them: he tells them plainly, that they had denied the holy One and killed the Prince of life, and had preferred a murderer to him;* and in the preceding chapter, he directly accuses them of having taken Jesus of Nazareth, and, by WICKED HANDS, crucified and slain him.

* Acts, iii. 14.

Our Saviour's remarkable prediction* naturally occurs on this occasion. For, even on the supposition that it ought to be taken literally, and not extended to all succeeding ages of the church, it most decidedly proves, that persons may be persecutors "UNTO BLOOD," without being gross hypocrites. "The time cometh, that whosoever killeth you, will think that he doth God service." And here it deserves to be noted that, though it is said these murderers would think they were doing God service, in killing his faithful servants, yet not one word is added in extenuation of their crimes. For ought we know, therefore, such men might be in a state of judicial hardness and impenitence of heart, on account of long continued habits of sin, and long opposition to light and truth. After all the candid concessions and reasonable conjectures that can be made, respecting the MEASURE of the wickedness of the various papal persecutions, it must be owned, both that the subject is delicate, and also that WE have not much to do with it. When we are wearied and astonished with the contemplation of the barbarous, and bloody scenes of this century, one of the most profitable, and most certain conclusions we can arrive at, is, that the human "heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked."

* John, xvi. 2.

CHAP. II.

The Council of Constance, including the Cases of John Huss, and Jerom of Prague.

THIS celebrated council did not make any essential reformation in religion: on the contrary, they persecuted men who truly feared God; and they tolerated all the predominant corruptions. Their labours, therefore, do not deserve to be recorded, on account of the piety and virtue of those who composed the council. Yet the transactions at Constance claim considerable attention in these memoirs. They tend to throw light on the state of religion at that time: they also serve to illustrate the character of John Huss and of Jerom; and they afford various instructive reflections to those, who love to attend to the dispensations of divine providence, and would understand the comparative power of nature and of grace, of mere human resources, and of the operations of the holy Spirit.

The council met in the year 1414. Its objects were various and of high importance.* The necessity of the times had called aloud for an assembly of this kind. Ecclesiastical corruptions had increased to an intolerable magnitude; and christendom had been distracted, nearly forty years, by a schism in the popedom. To settle this dispute, and restore peace to the church was the most urgent concern of the council. Three pretenders to the chair of St. Peter, severally, laid claim to infallibility. The very nature of their struggle was subversive of the authority to which each of them made pretensions; and "of their vain contest there seemed no end." The princes, statesmen,

* L'Enfant's History of the Council of Constance.
It is foreign to my design to follow this author through the details of his very accurate and circumstantial narration. The affairs, however, of John Huss and of Jerom deserve a minute attention.

and rulers, of the church in those times, wanted not discernment to see the danger to which the whole ecclesiastical system was exposed by these contentions; but it seems never to have come into the minds of them or of any of the members of the council, to examine the foundation on which the popedom itself was erected. That, on all sides, was looked on as sacred and inviolable, though allowed to be burdened and encumbered with innumerable abuses.

However, they deposed the three existing popes, and chose a fresh successor of St. Peter, Martin V.; and we are to remark a providential benefit, which arose from the accomplishment of this first object of the council; namely, that while they had their eye only on the restoration of the unity of the Roman see, they were led to decree the superiority of councils over popes. Thus a deep wound was given to the tyrannical hierarchy, which proved of considerable service to those real reformers, who arose about a hundred years after the council of Constance.

I say real reformers; for, I cannot give this venerable name to the members of that assembly. That there needed a reformation of the church in all its component parts, and that church discipline ought to be reestablished, these were ideas, indeed, which lay within their competence; and the members of this council universally confessed, that reformation and discipline ought to be prosecuted with vigour. But they brought not to the council the materials, which alone could qualify them for such a work. In general, the best individuals among them were merely moralists; had some "zeal for God, but not according to knowledge;" and knew no higher principles than the voice of natural conscience, the dictates of common sense, and some information concerning the preceptive part of christianity. Their system of religion was letter, not spirit; law, not gospel. They had some degree of insight into the distemper of human nature, little or none into the remedy. To promote the recovery of depraved mankind, they knew no methods

but those of moral suasion, upon principles merely natural. The original depravity of man, salvation through the atonement of a redeemer, and regeneration by the holy Spirit, were doctrines, the use and efficacy of which they did not understand: yet, these are the only effectual instruments for the reformation either of a corrupted church, or of a corrupted individual, though they are, by the world, generally suspected to be productive of enthusiasm, and are also too often professed by men of counterfeit religion.

A hundred years after the council of Constance, a reformation was attempted and carried on, with permanent success, by men furnished with truly evangelical views and materials. But the members of this celebrated council undertook to make "bricks without straw;" and their projects of reform served only, in the event, to teach posterity, that the real doctrines of the gospel ought to be distinctly known, cordially relished, and powerfully experienced, by those who undertake to enlighten mankind; and that without this apparatus, the efforts of the wisest and most dignified personages in Europe, (for such were those assembled at Constance,) will evaporate in the smoke of fair words and speeches, and of promising, but inefficient and unsubstantial schemes.

A moment's attentive consideration may convince us that this must unavoidably be the case. How could it be expected, in the instance before us, that popes and cardinals, bishops, and clergy, would enact, and what is still more, would execute laws, which bore hard on their own pride, their sloth, and their love of gain? or, that the laity, noble or vulgar, would submit to strict rules of church discipline? Nothing but the principle of divine love in the heart could effect these things; and divine love is learnt only in the school of Christ, and under the fostering influence of scripture doctrine, connected with spiritual discernment.* I need not put the reader in mind how igno-

* 1 Cor. ii. 14.

rant in general, in regard to these things, men were in the fifteenth century. And hence, we are no more to wonder at the failure of the attempts of the council of Constance, than at the inefficacy of the complaints, made from age to age, of the wickedness of men, both by philosophers of old and by nominal christians in our own times, while those, who complain and even endeavour to effect reforms, are destitute of real christian perceptions, and regard no other light than that of mere nature. Thus the institution of mere laws however good, " can never give life;"* " the motions of sin by the law work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death:"† if even the best characters, among the prodigious congregation at Constance, thus failed, through ignorance of the true method of relieving human evils, we need not be surprised, that those who were actuated by bad motives, should contribute nothing towards a real reformation. The consequence was, that the prevailing abuses remained in the church in full force. The council managed to restore unity to the popedom, which was indeed a very difficult point; but they found it more easy to procure consent to the deposition of wicked popes, than to compel the clergy to divest themselves of that avarice, ambition, and sensuality, which were the grand sources of the existing ecclesiastical disorders.‡ However, THAT which men attempted in vain by methods merely human, God himself, about a century afterwards, effected, by the foolishness of preaching,§ and by his own spirit of grace.

It was proposed, that the bishops and other pastors should be compelled to reside in their cathedrals and parishes, to visit their flocks, to renounce pluralities, and to preach the word of God themselves, instead of committing that charge to ignorant or profane priests. Amendments truly just and laudable! But those, who proposed these excellent things, were themselves in a high degree proper objects of censure. Some of the

* Gal. iii. † Rom. vii. ‡ L'Enfant. § 1 Cor. i.

orators of the council declared that, "they strained at a gnat and swallowed a camel." In fact, several little punctilios were reformed; but, as we have just observed, all the substantial evils remained in the church.

There can be no doubt but they ought to have begun with christian doctrine itself, and its influence on the heart, if they had expected success.

The knights of the Teutonic order, at this time ranged through all their own neighbourhood with fire and sword, under the pretence of converting infidels, and had been justly complained of by the king of Poland; yet this council supported them in their enormities; nor would they even condemn a libel written by a monk, who had exhorted all christians to murder that monarch and to massacre the Poles. John Petit, a friar, had publicly vindicated the assassination committed by the duke of Burgundy's order on the duke of Orleans, brother to the king of France. It may seem incredible, but it is true, that the king of France, who prosecuted this friar before the council of Constance, could not procure his condemnation. All the dignified orders in Europe, there assembled together, had not sufficient spirit and integrity to punish crimes of the most atrocious nature. Yet they could burn without mercy those whom they deemed heretics, though men of real godliness. This part of the conduct of the assembly particularly deserves our attention; and still more so, if we keep constantly in mind who the members were that composed it. Italy, France, Germany, Bohemia, Hungary, Poland, England, Denmark, Sweden, were represented by deputies. Four electors were present, namely, those of Mentz and Saxony, the elector Palatine, and the burgrave of Nuremberg, who there received the electoral cap, besides envoys from the other electors. The emperor Sigismund was never absent, unless employed in the express business of the council. Many other German princes were present, besides the clergy, among whom were twenty archbishops, nearly one hundred and fifty bishops, about

one hundred and fifty other dignitaries, and more than two hundred doctors.

After this general review, it may now be proper to lay before the reader a connected view of the proceedings of this council, chiefly in regard to those subjects which relate to the concerns of the real church of Christ.

At the opening of the council of Constance, pope John XXIII. and the emperor Sigismund were at the head of it; and they continually endeavoured to baffle the views of each other. The former was by far the most powerful of the three popes, who at that time struggled for the chair of St. Peter: but his character was infamous in the extreme; and Sigismund, while he pretended to acknowledge the authority of John, had formed a secret resolution to oblige him to renounce the pontificate. This same Sigismund was remarkable for hypocrisy and dissimulation: political artifices, however, were multiplied by both these potentates, and by many others connected with the council. But what has the church of Christ to do with the intrigues of politicians? These were the men who undertook to punish heretics and to reform the church.

John XXIII. secretly designed to leave the council as soon as possible; particularly if their pulse did not beat in his favour. His conscience suggested to him, that an inquiry into his own conduct would terminate in his disgrace; and the very situation of Constance, an imperial city, in the circle of Suabia, exposed him too much to the machinations of the emperor. As he had, however, in a council at Rome, already condemned the opinions of John Huss, he was determined to confirm that judgment at Constance, and in that way to signalize his zeal for what was then called the church.

John Huss had been summoned to the council to answer for himself, though already excommunicated at Rome. He obtained, however, a safe conduct* from

* A safe conduct here means an engagement in writing that he should be allowed to pass without molestation.

the emperor, who, in conjunction with his brother Wenceslaus, king of Bohemia, had committed him to the care of several Bohemian lords, particularly of John de Chlum. These travelled with him to Constance, where they arrived six days after the pope.

John Huss was born in Bohemia in 1373. He was of mean parentage, but was raised to eminence by his superior genius and industry. All the authors of that time acknowledge, that he was a man of capacity and eloquence, and highly esteemed for the probity and decency of his manners. This is the testimony of the famous Æneas Sylvius afterwards pope of Rome. But the letters of Huss written from Constance, which he specially requested might never be published, afford a still more striking attestation to his character. He was appointed rector of the university of Prague, which was then in a very flourishing state. His character was no less eminent in the church than in the academy. He was nominated preacher of Bethlehem in the year 1400; and was in the same year made confessor to Sophia of Bavaria, the wife of Wenceslaus king of Bohemia, a princess who highly esteemed John Huss, and was a personage of great merit: how far she was affected by the doctrine which he preached, it is not easy to ascertain; but there is no doubt that, after his condemnation, she was obliged, by the order of the emperor Sigismund, to retire to Presburg.

In 1405 Huss preached in the chapel of Bethlehem with great celebrity. Some of Wickliff's works had been brought into Bohemia by a Bohemian gentleman, named Faulfisch, when he returned from Oxford. Hence, and probably by other modes of conveyance, the evangelical views of the English reformer were introduced into that country. It is not easy to determine the point of time, when John Huss received a favourable impression of the works of Wickliff. At first he is said to have held them in detestation. The effect of prejudice indeed on a serious mind, against a person who has been condemned for heresy was not

easily to be overcome; and it is not impossible, but that Luther's account of his own first reception of the works of Huss might resemble the celebrated Bohemian's reception of the works of Wickliff. "When I studied at Erford," says that truly great man, "I found in the library of the convent, a book entitled, 'The Sermons of John Huss.' I was anxious to know the doctrines of that archheretic. My astonishment in the reading of them was incredible. What, thought I, could move the council to burn so great a man, so able and judicious an expositor of scripture! But then the name of Huss was held in abomination: if I mentioned him with honour, I imagined the sky would fall, and the sun be darkened; I therefore shut the book with indignation. But I comforted myself with the thought, that perhaps he had written this before he fell into heresy!" Such were the juvenile reflections of that renowned reformer.

But it is not in the power of prejudice to prevent the progress of the divine counsels, and the work of the holy Spirit on the heart. Notwithstanding the opposition of prejudice, habit, and natural corruptions, Huss was gradually convinced of the power and excellency of evangelical doctrine. It was not necessary that he should see all things in the same light as other reformers; but there are certain truths, in which all, who are taught of God, in every age, do and must agree; and certain points of experience also in religion, in which it is even impossible for them to differ. The doctrinal knowledge of the Bohemian reformer was indeed always very limited and defective; but the little fundamental light which, through grace, he attained, was directed to the best practical purposes. He preached loudly against the abuses of the Romish church; and particularly against the impostures of false miracles, which then abounded. And about the same year 1405 he also preached in a synod at Prague, in the archbishop's presence, with amazing freedom against the vices of the clergy.

It was impossible, that a man who rendered him-

self so obnoxious to the hierarchy, should escape the aspersions of calumny: accordingly we find that, in the latter part of the year 1408, and the beginning of 1409, a clamour was raised against him on the following occasion.* Gregory XII. one of the three popes, whose schism gave rise to the council of Constance, was received by Bohemia. But when measures were proposed for calling a general council to compose the schism, Huss engaged the university to support those measures, and exhorted all Bohemia to the same purpose. The archbishop of Prague, who was attached to Gregory, opposed Huss, called him a schismatic, and forbade him to exercise the pastoral functions in his diocese. About the same time, on occasion of a dispute between the natives and the foreigners who belonged to the university, Huss having supported the former, and gained his point, the Germans in disgust retired from Prague. This circumstance enabled the Bohemian teacher to speak more publicly according to the views of Wickliff. The archbishop of Prague committed the books of the latter to the flames in 1410. But the progress of his opinions was rather accelerated than retarded by this step.

The troubles of John Huss were now multiplied. He was excommunicated at Rome. He had sent his proctors thither to answer for him; but they were committed to prison,† after having remained there to no purpose a year and a half. Huss, after his excommunication, had no other remedy, but to appeal to Almighty God in very solemn terms. In his appeal, which was charged on him as a crime, among many other things, he says, " Almighty God, the one only essence in three persons, is the first and last refuge of those who are oppressed. Our Lord Jesus Christ, very God and very man, being desirous to redeem, from eternal damnation, his children, elected before the foundation of the world, has given, by suffering a bloody and ignominious death, this excellent example to his disciples, to commit their cause to the judg-

* Page 29. L'Enfant. † Ibid. p. 33.

ment of God." He continued still to preach on subjects, which he deemed seasonable and useful. In one sermon he treated of the uses of the commemoration of the saints, among which he reckons meditation on the misery of man, subject to death for sin; and on the death which Jesus Christ suffered for our sin. In this same sermon, while he zealously opposes the abuses of the times, he discovers that he himself was not yet entirely clear of the popish notion of purgatory. "In praying devoutly for the dead," says he, "we procure relief to the saints in purgatory." It is sufficiently plain, however, that he could not lay much stress on the prayers of the living for the dead; for he also says expressly, "that there is no mention of such a practice in the holy scriptures: and, that neither the prophets nor Jesus Christ, nor his apostles, nor the saints that followed close after, taught prayer for the dead." "I verily believe," continues Huss, "this custom was introduced by the avarice of priests, who don't trouble themselves to exhort the people to live well, as did the prophets, Jesus Christ and the apostles; but take great care to exhort them to make rich offerings in hopes of happiness and a speedy delivery from purgatory."

At length John Huss was forbidden to preach at Prague any more. All that he could then do was to instruct his countrymen by writings. Being summoned, as we have seen, to Constance, he obeyed; and before his departure, offered to give an account of his faith in the presence of a provincial synod at Prague, but was not able to obtain an audience. In this and some other particulars he appears to have acted with great frankness and sincerity; and, though his mind strongly forboded that which happened in the issue, his resolution to appear at the general council was constant and unmoved. By a letter,* which he wrote to a friend, immediately before he left Prague, he entreats him, on the outside of it, not to open the letter, till he should have had certain news of his death. And among

* L'Enfant, p. 40.

other things, he says, " You know, wo is me! before my priesthood I freely and frequently played at chess, neglected my time, and often unhappily provoked others and myself into blameable heat of temper by that game." About the same time he wrote a letter to his flock in terms which showed how much their spiritual advantage lay at his heart. He exhorted them to stedfastness in the doctrine which he had taught them; prayed for grace that he himself might persevere, and not betray the gospel by cowardice; and he begged them also to pray, that he might either glorify God by martyrdom, or return to Prague with an unblemished conscience, and with more vigour than ever to extirpate the doctrine of antichrist. He expressed himself to be very uncertain of the event, but spake like one resigned to the divine will, and joyful to die for the cause of Christ. In the course of his journey to Constance he acted the same open part, and every where declared his readiness to be heard by all mankind. Such was the character and conduct of Huss, who, as we have seen, arrived at Constance six days after the pontiff John XXIII.

On the succeeding day he gave notice of his arrival to the pope through his friend John de Chlum, who at the same time implored for him the protection of his holiness. This pope himself was then in much fear on his own account, and it behooved him not, in his present circumstances to exercise the fulness of papal domination. He therefore answered courteously; declared that he would use all his power to prevent any injustice being* done to him while at Constance; and he took off his excommunication.

John Huss appears to have expected that he should have been allowed to preach before the council; for he had prepared sermons for that purpose, which are inserted among his works.

In the first of these he professed his christian creed. He declares his reliance on the word of God, which,

* Ibid. p. 43.

he observes, is the true rule, and sufficient for salvation. He declares his veneration also for fathers and councils, so far as they are conformable to scripture. "Faith," he adds, "is the foundation of all virtues. Every man must be a disciple either of God or of Satan. Faith is the rudiment of one of these schools, infidelity of the other. A man must believe in God alone, not in the virgin, not in the saints, not in the church, not in the pope: for none of these are God." He distinguishes faith into three kinds. 1. To receive a position, but with some doubt, he apprehends to be the faith which we give to mere men, who yet are fallible. 2. To adhere without any doubt to the sentiments of holy doctors: still this is only to treat their sentiments as opinions, not as articles of faith. 3. To believe simply and purely is the faith due to the scriptures. This is the faith which he apprehends, involves in it all acts of obedience and love; the faith which no wicked man possesses: "the wicked man is a christian," says he, "in NAME only, and cannot rehearse the creed without making himself a liar. The church," he says, "is an assembly of all the predestinated; and consists, he thinks, of the triumphant church in heaven, the militant church on earth, and the sleeping church; (pitiable blindness!) who are now suffering in purgatory." He allows the intercession of the virgin Mary and of other saints; and, in favour of this popish tenet, he speaks far more forcibly, than might have been expected from one, who had so unlimited a veneration for the holy scriptures.

If Huss had been allowed to preach this, and his other sermon which treats of peace and unity, the injustice of his condemnation must have appeared evident to all mankind, and the council would have been covered with disgrace and ignominy. For there was something very peculiar in his case; he may justly be said to have been a martyr for holy practice itself. He does not seem to have held any one doctrine which at that day was called heretical. The superstitious notions of the times were, in general, parts of his creed:

and as far as a judgment can now be formed, he was not possessed of more light than was absolutely necessary to constitute the character of a genuine christian. On this account the wickedness of his enemies was more palpably evident. The world hated him, because he was not of the world, and because he testified of it, that its works were evil. In what then did the peculiarities of his doctrine consist? The little specimen, which has been given of his creed explains this matter. He held the faith of God's elect, a divine faith necessarily productive of love and obedience, distinct in its whole kind from the mere human faith of wicked men. With them faith has nothing in its nature that draws a man to God in confidence and affection; with them, the term "vicious believer," appears not to be a solecism in language; and indeed, it may generally be observed, that godly men in all ages, even those men, whose evangelical knowledge, like that of Huss, is extremely imperfect, always distinguish between a dead and a living faith; and that their views of this distinction are the consequences of the work of the holy Spirit on their own hearts. They have known in common with the rest of mankind what a formal assent to christianity means; they have known also, by the influence of the holy Spirit, what a lively faith means. The former is merely human, has a dead uniformity, or an unanimated sameness: the latter has life and power; is productive of spiritual exercises and actions; is capable of great varieties, augmentations, declensions, and intervals; and is felt to be not of man, but of God. It is the distinctive mark of a child of God, THAT HE IS IN POSSESSION OF THIS LIVELY FAITH; and this, no doubt, was the spark of divine fire, which inflamed the heart of the Bohemian martyr; and which was there preserved alive amidst the contagion of superstition, the temptations of the world, and the menaces of insolent and tyrannical domination.*

* I have here described what the faith of the gospel implies and produces, rather than in what it specifically consists. This has been done on

Those who look only at the surface of religion, might be tempted to think, that the council in general was influenced by the Spirit of God. In all their public sessions they sang an anthem, and then they prayed kneeling.* After having remained some time in this posture, a deacon called out to them to rise; and the president, addressed himself to the Holyghost in a loud voice in a collect, which, in very solemn and explicit terms, supplicated his effectual influence, that notwithstanding the enormity of their sins, which filled them with dread, he would deign to descend into their hearts, to direct them, to dictate their decrees, and to execute them himself, and also to preserve their minds from corrupt passions, and not suffer them, through ignorance or selfishness, to swerve from justice and truth. The ideas, and perhaps the very words, of the prayer were taken from better times, when the operations of the Holyghost were not only professed, but FELT in christian assemblies. The formalities of true religion often remain a long time, after the spirit of it has been almost extinguished. It is not easy to say how much wickedness may be united with religious formalities. The rulers and great men of the Jewish nation, in the time of Christ, were remarkable examples of the hypocrisy here alluded to; and those, who are acquainted with the history of their flagitious conduct, will not be surprised to hear of similar instances. Both the emperor Sigismund and his consort Barba attended the religious ceremonies of this council, and both were infamous for lewdness.†

Sigismund in a deacon's habit read the gospel, while the pope celebrated mass!

Huss was soon deprived of his liberty in the following manner. He was accused by Paletz, professor of divinity at Prague, and by Causis, a pastor of one of the parishes of the same city. These men caused

former occasions, and may be done again in the course of this history, when we are reviewing characters who understood evangelical truth much better than Huss did

* Ibid, p. 50.

† Æneas Sylvius. Hist.

bills to be posted up against him in Constance, as an excommunicated heretic. When Huss complained, the pope replied, " What can I do in the case? your own countrymen* have done it." The bishops of Augsburg and of Trent were directed to summon him to appear before John XXIII. " I had expected," said Huss, " to give an account of myself before the general council, and not before the pope and his cardinals; however, I am willing to lay down my life, rather than to betray the truth." He set out therefore without delay, accompanied by his generous friend John de Chlum. On his arrival at the pope's palace he was committed to prison. Chlum made loud complaints to the pope, but in vain. Eight articles were exhibited against Huss by Causis, and the pope appointed commissioners to try him. The vexations and insults, to which he was exposed, were endless: and there was this peculiar injustice practised against him, that he was accused of being more inimical to the doctrines of the church of Rome, than he really was. Whatever Wickliff maintained, Huss was accused of maintaining: nor were his own express declarations respected, particularly in regard to transubstantiation, a doctrine, which he certainly believed, and on which he wrote his thoughts while under confinement at Constance. Such however was the strength of mind with which he was endowed, that, during the same period, he wrote also several tracts on subjects of practical godliness, which were sent to Prague by friends whom he had at Constance. With great clearness he vindicated himself against the charge of heresy; but, his holy life was unpardonable in the eyes of his enemies: moreover, all those, whom the faithfulness of his pastoral services in Bohemia had provoked, now found an opportunity to wreak their vengeance upon him.

The generous count de Chlum, grieved and incensed at the imprisonment of Huss, wrote to Sigismund

* Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me. John, xviii. 35.

on this subject. That prince immediately sent express orders to his ambassadors to cause him to be set at liberty, and even to break the gates of the prison in case of resistance. We naturally expect to hear, in the next place, of the prisoner's enlargement; for, independently of this application of count de Chlum, the honour of Sigismund himself, who had positively promised a safe conduct to Huss, seemed to require it. But notwithstanding all this, the unfortunate Bohemian teacher was not released! The crooked arts and intrigues both of the pope and of the emperor, were too powerful for the sincerity and open dealings of Huss: and, he soon found, that to commit himself to him, that judgeth righteously, was his only expedient. In the mean time, the doctors, in their preachings, exclaimed most pathetically against the prevailing evils and abuses, and exhorted the council to reform the church with vigour. Its growing corruptions and enormities were, by them, exposed in the strongest colours. Wickliff himself, or Huss, could scarcely have spoken in a more pointed or in a severer manner. But these INNOVATORS, we find, were not permitted, to censure, with impunity, even the most shameful practices. The explanation is, THEIR attachment to the see of Rome itself was doubted; whereas the divines just mentioned, preached by order of their superiors, and constantly took particular care, in the midst of their keenest animadversions, to express an unequivocal respect to the popedom in general.

In the beginning of the year 1415, the commissioners for examining Huss, found themselves impeded by the emperor's grant of a safe conduct; and they scrupled not, at once to intreat that prince to violate his most solemn engagement. To be brief; Sigismund was at length persuaded, that his conscience ought not to be burdened in this matter; but that he was excused from keeping faith with a man, accused of heresy; and that to acquiesce in the desires of the venerable council, was the proper line of conduct for an

obedient and, " good son of the church."* Such was the language of the romanists. A direct breach of faith is, however, so strong a violation of the law WRITTEN IN THE HEART of man, that it was not easy even for the most able defender of a bad cause, to vindicate actions of this kind. Laboured apologies have been published to soften the transactions before us.† But to what purpose is it to multiply words, in order to misrepresent a plain fact, which may be told in very few lines? The authority of Sigismund extended over the empire; HE, by virtue of that authority, REQUIRED ALL HIS SUBJECTS, TO SUFFER HUSS TO PASS AND REPASS SECURE; AND, FOR THE HONOUR OF HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY, IF NEED BE, TO PROVIDE HIM WITH GOOD PASSPORTS.‡ Constance was an imperial city. From this city he was NOT ALLOWED to repass, but was detained in prison, till he was unjustly burnt by the order of the council. Was this for the honour of his imperial majesty?

The perfidious character of Sigismund indeed was well known. It appears from one of the letters of John Huss, that, before his departure, he had been told by some persons, that the emperor would betray him. But, this servant of God, in honour of his master, ventured every thing for the cause of divine truth.

Before the death of their countryman, the Bohemian nobility, enraged at the perfidy of Sigismund, repeatedly remonstrated, by letters, against his proceedings: but all to no purpose. At the solicitation of Paletz, Huss was confined in the dominican convent, where he became dangerously sick, through the bad air and other inconveniencies of a noisome dungeon.

But suffering is not the PECULIAR lot of godly men: wickedness has, also, its hardships and its inconveniencies. That same John XXIII., who had most unrighteously persecuted Huss, gradually found him-

* Nauclerus.

† Maimburg's Hist. of the Western Schism, Part ii. Varillas Hist. of Wickliff, Part i.

‡ L'Enfant, p. 61.

self in so disagreeable a situation at Constance, partly from the accusations of his enemies, to the justice of which his own conscience could not but assent, and partly from the intrigues and manœuvres of Sigismund and the majority of the council, that he determined to depart, in secret, from the assembly. Four nations were represented at Constance, namely, the Italians, the Germans, the French, and the English. The last of these had proposed even to arrest the pope; and, though this proposal did not take effect, there seemed a general agreement in the four nations to oblige him to resign his authority. The other two antipopes, Benedict XIII. who was chiefly owned in Spain; and Gregory XII. who had some partisans in Italy, were also pressed to resign; but, like John XXIII. they were determined to preserve the shadow of power as long as possible. The three popes seemed to vie with one another in equivocation, artifice and disingenuity. However, Benedict and Gregory were not present at Constance, but sent thither their respective legates, during the sessions. At this moment, when the council seemed not a little embarrassed what course they should take, William Fillastre, a cardinal and a French divine, composed a memorial, which was highly acceptable both to the emperor and to the nations. He even advanced a sentiment, which, at last, very much prevailed in the assembly, and was actually reduced to practice; namely, that a "general council was authorised to depose even a lawful pope."* This, as we have already observed, was the most beneficial effect of the council of Constance. The wisdom of divine providence weakened the strength of antichrist by the measures of a council, which, in the main, was destitute both of piety and of probity!

It is a remarkable instance of the love of power, in men who have been habituated to it, that John XXIII. even in the decline of his authority, was glad to signalize the relicks of his pontificate by the canonization of Bridget, a Swedish woman, which took place in this same year 1415.

* Page 109.

After numberless intrigues, in which the pope and the emperor seemed to strive which should exceed the other in dissimulation, the former fled from the council to Schaffhausen, whence he wrote to the emperor a letter couched in the most respectful terms. Schaffhausen, it should be observed, was a city belonging to Frederic, duke of Austria, who had promised to defend pope John.

By this step, the designs of those, who really intended to put an end to the schism, seemed to be quashed entirely. Among these was the emperor himself, in whose conduct, scandalous and hypocritical as it was in the extreme, one object is yet plainly discernible, a sincere desire of restoring the unity of the hierarchy. He assured the council, on the day after the departure of pope John, that he would defend their authority to the last drop of his blood. He observed, that there were many antichrists in the world, who sought their own interest, not that of Jesus Christ. He inveighed against the conduct of John; he exposed his tyranny, simony, chicanery, and insincerity, and exhorted them to judge him according to his deserts. Thus, while the members of this assembly agreed in persecuting the church of God, and still detained in prison the excellent John Huss, they were involved in extreme difficulties and scarcely knew how to support the system of idolatry, and secular formality of religion, to which they were in general attached. The doctrine of the superiority of a council, started by Fillastre, was, however, maintained and pressed at this time in an elaborate discourse of John Gerson, chancellor of the university of Paris, who was looked upon as the soul of the assembly, and who, in fact, was one of the greatest men of that age in erudition and knowledge. He admits the pope to be Christ's vicar on earth; but asserts that his power is limited, and ought to be restrained by certain rules and laws for the edification of the church, to which the authority of the pope and all other persons ought to be devoted. Gerson seems to have disregarded the authority of scripture, which knows nothing of such a vicar of

Christ. Common sense, however, and the experience of the necessity of some restrictions of the papal power appear to have suggested to this great man several salutary arguments and propositions; nor is this the only instance in which we may see, that even mere natural principles, without the aid of revelation, can proceed to a CERTAIN LENGTH in correcting the enormous abuses of a corrupt church.

While the imperial and papal parties were thus contending, the commissioners endeavoured to oblige John Huss to retract, but in vain. Though infirm, and harassed, during his confinement in prison, with a variety of vexations, he answered to ever particular inquiry and objection; at the same time, always desiring to be heard by the council itself. The pope's officers hitherto guarded him; but these being gone to their master, he was delivered to the bishop of Constance, and was afterwards carried to the fortress of Gottleben. In his letters to his friends, he commends the pope's officers for their gentle treatment, and expresses his fears of worse usage in his new circumstances.

It was one of those remarkable instances of the conduct of divine providence, with which the history of the council of Constance abounds, that John XXIII. himself, the unrighteous persecutor of Huss, was soon after brought as a prisoner to the same castle of Gottleben, and lodged in the same place with the victim of his cruelty. For Sigismund, determined to support the authority of the council, took such measures as effectually quashed the power of Frederick, duke of Austria, reduced him to surrender at discretion, and obliged him to abandon the cause of the pope. Whence this pontiff, who at first had presided at the council, after having been driven to the necessity of fleeing from place to place, was at length confined at Gottleben, which was within half a league from Constance. Seldom has there been a case, which more remarkably showed that, in external things, the same events often attend the righteous and the wicked. The real difference of condition between the pope and the martyr was

INTERNAL, and ought to be measured by the different frame of their MINDS. The one was harassed with all the pangs of disappointed ambition; and had neither the knowledge nor the disposition to console himself with the DIVINE PROMISES; the latter " in patience possessed his spirit and rejoiced in hope of the glory of God."

John XXIII. was, at length, solemnly deposed, and was also rendered incapable of being reelected. The same sentence was issued against Benedict XIII. and Gregory XII. The conduct of these three men, particularly of the first, had been so infamous, that all the world applauded these determinations of the council. In general the members of this assembly were influenced, by superstitious, selfish, worldly motives; but this decision is among the very few important instances in which they merit commendation.

While the Bohemian reformer, contrary to every principle of justice, honour, and humanity, was still detained in confinement, and still in vain solicited a fair hearing of his cause, there was exhibited at this council another striking example of the same spirit of persecution.

Jerom of Prague arrived at Constance. He was a master of arts; but had neither the clerical nor the monastic character. He is universally allowed to have been a man of very superior talents. He had adhered to John Huss; and very vigorously seconded all his endeavours to promote a reformation in Bohemia. He had travelled into England for the sake of his studies; and had thence brought the books of Wickliff into his own country.* When Huss was setting out from Prague, Jerom had exhorted him to maintain with stedfastness the doctrines, which he had preached; and had promised that he would himself go to Constance to support him, if he should hear that he was oppressed. Huss, in one of his letters, expressly desired a friend to prevent Jerom's performance of this

* Camerar. Histor. Narr

promise, lest he should meet with the same treatment as he himself had experienced. But Jerom had the generosity to disregard the intreaties of Huss, and came directly to Constance. Hearing, however, that Huss was not allowed a fair examination, and that some secret machination was carrying on against himself, he retired to Uberlingen, whence he wrote to the emperor to request a safe conduct. Sigismund refused to grant his petition. Upon which Jerom published a paper, declaring it to be his desire to answer any charges of heresy that could possibly be brought against him. And for the purpose of executing so honest a purpose, he begged, in the name of God, to have a safe conduct granted to him. "If," says he, "I am put in prison, and violence is used against me before I am convicted, the council will manifest to the whole world their injustice by such a proceeding." The publication of this writing produced no satisfactory answer; and Jerom finding it impossible to be of any service to his friend Huss, he resolved to return to his own country. After his departure from Constance, he was summoned to appear before the council; and a SAFE CONDUCT or PASSPORT was despatched to him; which promised him, indeed, all manner of security, but it contained such a SALVO TO JUSTICE and the INTERESTS OF THE FAITH, as rendered it, in effect, a mere nullity: and as to the citation for his appearance, Jerom protested, on his first examination, that it had never reached his hands.

To omit a long detail of uninteresting particulars, this persecuted reformer was arrested at Hirsaw on his return to Bohemia; and led in chains to Constance.

He was immediately brought before a general congregation, which seems, on this occasion to have assembled for the express purpose of insulting, insnaring, and browbeating their virtuous prisoner. A bishop questioned him concerning his precipitate flight from Uberlingen, and his nonobedience to the citation. "Because," answered Jerom, "I was not allowed a safe conduct: notwithstanding, however, if I had known

of the citation, I would have returned instantly, though I had been actually on the confines of Bohemia." Upon this answer, there arose such a clamour in the assembly, that no one could be heard distinctly: every mouth opened, at once, against Jerom; and the impartial spectator saw rather the representation of the baiting of a wild beast, than of a wise assembly investigating truth, and dispensing justice. When order was restored, Gerson who had formerly known Jerom in France, and who discovered much acrimony towards BOTH the Bohemian reformers, reproached him for having formerly given much offence to the university of Paris, by introducing several erroneous propositions. With great spirit Jerom answered, that it was hard to have opinions objected to him, of so long a date; and that, moreover, the disputations of young students were never to be considered as strict disquisitions of truth. "As I was admitted master of arts," said he, "I used the liberty of discussion allowed to philosophers; nor was I then charged with any error: I am still ready to maintain what I advanced at that time, if I am allowed; and also to retract if I be convicted of mistake."

This was not the only instance in which Jerom had occasion to show his promptitude in answering calumnies. He was repeatedly attacked in a similar style; for a persecuted follower of Christ is looked on, by the world, as lawful game. The governors of the university of Cologne and of Heidelburg made heavy complaints of the heresies which the prisoner had maintained in those places respectively. "You vented several errors in our university," said a doctor from Cologne. "Be pleased to name one," answered Jerom. The accuser was instantly stopped in his career, and pleaded that his memory failed him. "You advanced most impious heresies among us," said a divine from Heidelburg: "I remember one particularly concerning the trinity. You declared that it resembled water, snow, and ice." Jerom avowed, that he still persisted in his opinions, but was ready to retract with humility

and with pleasure, when he should be convinced of an error. However, no opportunity was allowed either for explanation or defence: all was confusion and uproar: voices burst out from every quarter, "Away with him, away with him; to the fire; to the fire.

Jerom stood astonished at the gross indecency of this scene; and as soon as he could, in any degree, be heard, he looked round the assembly with a steady and most significant countenance, and cried aloud, "Since nothing but my blood will satisfy you, I am resigned to the will of God." With sufficient adroitness, (if the passage had but been quoted in support of a better cause,) the archbishop of Saltzbourg replied, "No Jerom—God hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that he turn from his way and live."

After this tumultuous examination Jerom was delivered to the officers of the city, and immediately carried to a dungeon. Some hours afterward, Wallenrod, archbishop of Riga, caused him to be conveyed privately to St. Paul's church, where he was bound to a post, and his hands were chained to his neck. In this posture he remained ten days, and was fed with bread and water only. His friends all this time knew not what was become of him; till at length one of them received notice of his pitiable situation from the keeper of the prison, and procured him better nourishment. But notwithstanding this, the various hardships he had undergone, brought upon him a dangerous illness, in the course of which Jerom pressed the council to allow him a confessor. With difficulty he at length obtained his request; and, through the means of his confessor, the poor heretic procured some small mitigation of his sufferings from bonds and other cruel treatment. But he remained in prison till his death.

A number of important, coincident, circumstances, tending to illustrate the state of religion in those times, have given vast celebrity to the council of Constance; otherwise, the reader must now be convinced, that the members who composed that immense assembly, merit

the description which we have already given of their general character. Many of them were learned and able; many of them superstitious and bigoted; and most of them worldlyminded and unprincipled, and totally ignorant of evangelical truth.

As the works of the famous Wickliff had undoubtedly laid the foundation of the religious innovations in Bohemia, they now proceeded to condemn the doctrines of that obnoxious reformer. In this point they harmonized with John XXIII., whom they had deposed and now held in custody. For this same pontiff, John XXIII., had formerly at the desire of Arundel, archbishop of Canterbury, condemned the doctrines of Wickliff.* These very doctrines, digested into forty-five articles, which had formally been pronounced heretical at Rome, were now read in the council; and as far as appears, they were reprobated without one dissenting voice, and the author of them was pronounced a heretic.

The decrees of so violent and so iniquitous a council as that of Constance, concerning articles of faith, are of little moment. The heads of the articles, however in the main and in substance, express the real sentiments of Wickliff, which have been already considered and reviewed. His opposition to the POPISH† doctrine of transubstantiation, was positive and unequivocal. In some particular points, his meaning seems to have been distorted, through prejudice or malice. In regard to his opinions concerning tithes and the temporal possessions of the clergy, let the reader, when he has compared the several arguments advanced by the parties, judge for himself, whether Wickliff or the council had the advantage in that controversy. After what has been stated in chapter the third, cent. 14, I I shall make no further observations on the subject, except that the council, on this head, do not appear to have misrepresented Wickliff's notions.

* Wilkin's Council, p. 350.

† It has been before observed, that on this article of faith Wickliff approaches nearly to CONSUBSTANTIATION.

" Tithes," says Wickliff, " are not of divine right, because it cannot be proved from the gospel, that Jesus Christ either paid or ordered them to be paid." In his complaints to the king and parliament he desired, that tithes and offerings might be GIVEN, as before, to honest and able persons, not EXTORTED by force. He thinks it wrong, that the laity should be so much oppressed for the purpose of pampering the luxury of a priest, as not to be able to maintain their own families, and to relieve the poor. " As the laity only," says he, " paid tithes to be instructed in the word of God, there are many cases, in which according to the laws of God and man, the people may refuse to pay them. However, a GOOD priest ought to have a handsome maintenance: and the appropriation of parish churches to rich monasteries is a great evil."

Even the council of Constance will deserve to be heard, when they appeal to scripture, and give reasons to support their decrees. " The right," say they, " which the clergy have to the possession of temporalities, is established by several arguments drawn from the holy scriptures. The clergy under the old law possessed forty-eight cities with their suburbs. They had tithes of all the Israelites, and the first fruits of their corn, wine, oil, &c. as well as of all things consecrated to God. Besides, if according to St. Paul, a bishop must be given to hospitality, and a deacon must rule his house, they must have houses and substance. It appears by the book of the Acts, that the believers had possessions; and among those believers were the clergy. Jesus Christ himself had money, of which Judas was the treasurer. God orders Jeremiah to buy a field, which belonged to a levite, who is called in scripture Hanameel. Augustin, in an epistle to a bishop, named Boniface, " observes, that what the clergy possess more than necessary, belongs to the poor. What other practical tendency can Wickliff's doctrine on this subject have, than to stir up the laity to seize the possessions of the clergy?"

Wickliff is accused also of saying, that all things

happen from absolute necessity. The council use the common arminian arguments in opposition to the English reformer, whose sentiments, however, on this subject have never been shown to be materially different from what by far the greater part of good christians have maintained in all ages.

If the council of Constance had studied to vindicate Wickliff's reasonings respecting the abuses of popery, and to cast an odium upon their own doctrines and proceedings, they could scarcely, it should seem, have effected their purpose by surer means, than by using certain arguments which they thought proper to bring forward in confutation of the opinions of the man whom they looked on as a most dangerous innovator. Thus, on one occasion, they boldly affirm, "That there is no salvation out of the church of Rome." A proposition of this magnitude, one would have thought, required all the proof and illustration that could be given to it. Whereas the learned council content themselves with gravely appealing to a decree of the lateran council, and to a decretal of pope Callixtus, which established the two following points; 1st, that the church of Rome is the mistress of all churches; and 2dly, that it is not lawful to depart from her decisions. "Hence, say they, it clearly follows, that the pope is the immediate vicegerent of Jesus Christ, because the church of Rome has so determined. Though this or that particular pope be corrupt, the church of Rome itself can never decay." Thus do these men give the palm of truth to the man whom they condemn as a heretic. For HE appealed to the scriptures; THEY to the church of Rome; on a subject too, in which that church is more particularly bound to adduce another sort of argument than that of her own authority.

In the same year commissioners were appointed to inquire into the disputes between the Teutonic knights and the Poles. And though nothing was decided at present in that business, it may throw some light on the state of christendom, to give a general idea of the case. The Prussians, as we have seen, were among

the last of the nations of Europe, who received the forms of christianity. Barbarous and untractable in their manners, they invaded and harassed their neighbours the Poles, who called to their assistance the Teutonic knights, the remnants of those warlike crusaders, who so long had desolated the east. The knights, in consideration of the succours afforded to the Poles, received from them the grant of Prussia and of some neighbouring districts; which grant was confirmed by the Roman pontiff. In this manner Prussia at length was obliged to profess itself christian, nor do there seem to be in history any instances of national conversions, more contrary to the genius of the gospel, than this of the Prussians. The knights, armed with indulgences for the conversion of infidels, and with bulls for putting themselves in possession of conquered countries, gratified their military passion, while they imagined they were doing God service, and while they wasted all the neighbourhood with fire and sword, and assaulted even the Poles their benefactors. Several pitched battles were fought between them and the king of Poland, in which they were generally defeated. Their perfidy was equal to their ambition; for though truces were made from time to time, they continually violated them, as if they had been determined with all their might to disgrace the holy religion for which they professed so much zeal. Ladislaus, king of Poland, had views more honourable to the christian name. In a letter, which he wrote to a friend, he protested, that he could not refrain from tears before a battle, in which he foresaw the defeat of the knights, and that he entered into the engagement with much commiseration of his enemies.

The repeated violences of these fighting professors of christianity, obliged this prince, though victorious in the field, to send ambassadors to the council of Constance. The question of law for the decision of the assembly was, whether it is right for christians to convert infidels by force of arms, and to seize their estates. The knights maintained the affirmative, the

Polish ambassadors the negative; and such was the state of religion at that time, that the authority of a council was deemed necessary to decide a case, which to us does not appear to involve the smallest difficulty. When men are heated by ambition, or blinded by prejudice and selfinterest, they often forget the dictates of common sense, and the first principles of morality.

In the same year 1415, another object of controversy was started in the council, which was afterwards attended with important consequences, and produced one of the usual subjects of contention between the papists and the protestants; I mean the doctrine of the communion in both kinds.* John of Prague, bishop of Litomissel in Moravia, censured in the assembly the practice of the followers of Huss, who administered the wine to the laity. About twenty-five years before the council of Constance, Matthias, a curate of Prague, had ventured to preach publicly against the general disuse of the cup in the communion, and is said to have actually administered the sacrament to the laity in both kinds. It is not easy to say precisely, at what period the general disuse took place, but we have seen that it was gradually effected in the dark ages, long after the time of Gregory the first of Rome; and that it was, most probably, a concomitant of the doctrine of transubstantiation. Matthias was obliged to retract in a synod assembled at Prague in 1389. It is however agreeable to the general views of this history to observe, from a Bohemian writer,† that Matthias was a pastor of great piety and probity, fervently zealous for the truth of Jesus Christ and the doctrine of the gospel, an enemy to the reigning corruptions and abuses, and one who suffered greatly for his assiduity in preaching the word of God. He died in 1394. Some months after the departure of John Huss for Constance, Jacobel, a pastor of Prague, a man renowned for learning and purity of manners, revived

* L'Enfant, p. 256. † Procopius of Prague.

the doctrine of Matthias. Peter of Dresden, being expelled from Saxony for maintaining the waldensian doctrines, retired to Prague and there instructed youth. From him Jacobel learnt that the withholding the cup from the laity was an error.* The man was faithful to his convictions: he preached with perspicuity and with vehemence: he roused men's attention and excited their zeal; and by these means a flame was kindled throughout Bohemia respecting this matter. The clergy of that kingdom complained to the council of Constance; and the bishop of Litomissel, while he impeached Jacobel, represented the circumstance of this new controversy, as a consequence of the doctrine of John Huss, in order to hasten his condemnation.

That reformer had probably been inclined to the views of Jacobel before he left Prague; but it was not till after he came to Constance, that he published his approbation of the communion in both kinds. The principal author, or to speak more properly, the principal reviver of this practical truth in the church of Christ, was Jacobel, who seems to have been a zealous, active, laborious, minister of Christ. Little indeed is known of his pastoral services, because here, as in other cases, we have to lament that the accounts of vital godliness are general and short, while those of the controversies in external affairs are verbose and prolix. Let the christian reader, however, contemplate with a lively satisfaction the providential effects of waldensian light and knowledge in spiritual things.

The appearance of the new controversy, added to the question concerning Jerom of Prague, increased the fury of the storm against Huss; and his enemies laboured day and night for his destruction. His health and strength were decayed by the rigour of confine-

* It appears from Perrin's History of the Waldenses, p. 156, that this people rejected the doctrine of transubstantiation. According to them, "the eating of the spiritual bread is the eating of Christ's body figuratively. Otherwise, Christ must have been eaten perpetually. For we need to feed on him continually in a spiritual sense. To eat him, is to abide in him."

ment. The great men of Bohemia, repeatedly insisted on justice being done to their countryman. But justice was a stranger at Constance: the emperor himself had perfidiously given up this faithful servant of God to the malice of his enemies; and the council, as if conscious of the difficulty of condemning him openly, had recourse to the despicable means of attempting, by repeated insults and vexations, to shake his constancy, and render a public trial unnecessary. He was frequently examined in private. An air of violence and of menace was employed on those occasions, of which we may form some idea from one of the letters of Huss; "Causis, says he, was there, holding a paper in his hand, and stirring up the bishop of Constantinople to oblige me to answer distinctly to each article it contained. Every day he is brewing some mischief or other. God, for my sins, has permitted HIM AND PALETZ to rise up against me. Causis examines all my letters and words with the air of an inquisitor; and Paletz has written down all the conversation which we have had together for many years. I have this day suffered great vexation."

The approbation of a good conscience, and the comforting presence of the spirit of God, appears to have supported this holy man in all his sufferings. He gave his adversaries no advantage over him either through warmth or timidity; he refused to give answers in private; he reserved himself to the public trial which he had always solicited; he retracted nothing of what he had openly preached, and he possessed his soul in patience and resignation.

The unrighteous views of the council being thus far baffled, he was conducted to Constance, lodged in the franciscan monastery, and loaded with chains; in which condition he remained till the day of his condemnation.

His first hearing before the council was attended with so much confusion, through the intemperate rage of his enemies, that nothing could be concluded. In the second, in which the emperor was present, for the

purpose of preserving order, Huss was accused of denying the doctrine of transubstantiation. Some Englishmen, who knew what Wickliff held on that point, and who were ready to take for granted, that Huss dissented in no article from their countryman, pressed him vehemently on the subject. It appeared however, that the Bohemian teacher followed the church of Rome on this important doctrine; and the sincerity of his creed, though a mistaken one, appears from his treatise on the body of Christ.

A tedious dispute ensued concerning the refusal of Huss to join with those, who condemned the errors of Wickliff. He explained himself with sufficient precision on this head: he declared, that he blamed the conduct of the archbishop Subinco at Prague, only because he had condemned Wickliff's books without examination, and without distinction; and he added, that most of the doctors of the university of Prague found fault with that prelate, because he produced no reasons from the scriptures. Huss further observed to the council, that, not having been able to obtain justice from John XXIII. he had appealed from him to Jesus Christ. His seriousness in mentioning this appeal exposed him to the derision of the council. It was even doubted whether it was lawful to appeal to Jesus Christ. Huss, however, with great gravity affirmed, that it was always lawful to appeal from an inferior to a higher court; that in this case the judge was infallible, full of equity and compassion, and one who would not refuse justice to the miserable. The levity of the assembly, and the seriousness of the prisoner were remarkably contrasted in these proceedings. The reader will of course understand John Huss in the sense in which, no doubt, he intended to be understood. In appealing to Jesus Christ, the conscientious martyr had his own mind fixed on the last judgment, and he aimed at making an impression on the court by directing their attention to that awful tribunal.

It would be tedious and uninteresting to take notice of the variety of calumnies with which he was aspersed. One instance may deserve to be mentioned.* "You one day, said his accusers, advised the people to take up arms against those, who opposed your doctrine." "I one day, replied Huss, while I was preaching on the christian armour, described in the sixth chapter to the Ephesians, exhorted my audience to take the sword of the spirit, and the helmet of salvation; but I expressly admonished them, that I meant the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God, and not a material sword." Sigismund exhorted him to retract his errors, and declared, that rather than support him in his heresy, he would with his own hands kindle the fire to burn him.

John de Chlum, however, was not to be dismayed by the power and multitude of the adversaries of Huss: he supported the insulted victim of their fury with courage and constancy. In his third hearing, John Huss, answered the inquiries made to him concerning articles of supposed heresy, which were extracted from his own works. He answered severally to the questions with much clearness and candour, owning, denying, or explaining, as occasions required. He was vehemently pressed to retract his errors, to own the justice of the accusations, and to submit to the decrees of the council. But neither promises nor menaces moved him. "To abjure, said he, is to renounce an error that hath been held. But, as in many of those articles, errors are laid to my charge which I never thought of, how can I renounce them by oath? As to those articles, which I own to be mine, I will renounce them with all my heart, if any man will teach me sounder doctrines than what I have advanced." His conscientious integrity, however, availed him not. The court demanded a universal retraction; and nothing short of that could procure him their favour. The tedious malignity of the third day's examination

* L'Enfant, p. 330. vol. i.

oppressed at length both the mind and body of Huss; and the more so, because he had passed the preceding night sleepless through pain of the toothach. For some days before, he had also been afflicted with the gravel, and was, in other respects, in a weak state of health. At the close of the examination he was carried back to prison, whither John de Chlum followed him. "Oh what a comfort, said he, was it to me, to see that this nobleman did not disdain to stretch out his arm to a poor heretic in irons, whom all the world, as it were, had forsaken!" In the same letter in which he mentions this, he begs the prayers of his friend, because "the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Such is the treatment, which the dearest and most faithful servants of God are frequently called upon to endure from an evil world. After the departure of Huss, Sigismund, with the most unrelenting barbarity, expressed himself against him, as a heretic worthy of the flames. On the next day a form of retraction was sent to this persecuted prisoner, which, though it was penned in equivocal and ambiguous terms, plainly appeared on the whole, to imply a confession of guilt. Huss therefore refused to sign it; and added, that he had rather be cast into the sea with a millstone about his neck, than give offence to his pious neighbours by acknowledging that to be true, which they knew to be false; that he had preached patience and constancy to others, and that he was willing to show an example of these graces, and hoped by divine assistance to be enabled to do so.

We have constantly seen in the course of this history, that the holiness of heart and life, which real christians have evidenced from age to age, was always connected with the peculiar doctrines of christianity. Sometimes one of these doctrines, and sometimes another, constituted the prominent feature of their profession; but it is in vain to look for men of real holiness and virtue, who were inimical or even indifferent to the fundamentals of the gospel. If there were

any one doctrine more particularly insisted on than another by sincere christians, that doctrine was always in its nature, of considerable importance; and by just connexion it implied and involved the whole of godliness, even though that connexion might not be understood or relished in every part by all persons of true piety. Should we then be asked, what peculiar doctrine was maintained and espoused by John Huss, whose holiness and integrity were undoubtedly eminent, the answer is, it was the doctrine of the depravity of human nature and of the necessity of a divine influence. This I doubt not, will appear sufficiently evident to the evangelical reader, who will take the trouble fully to consider several of the articles, which were objected to him, and also some extracts from his letters; for, notwithstanding that the frequent use of the terms PREDESTINATE, CHOSEN, ELECT, &c. in those articles and extracts, might lead an uninformed and superficial reader to conclude that Huss was merely a speculative defender of the doctrine of absolute decrees, without being an advocate for a real change of heart and personal holiness, it deserves to be remarked, first, that this reformer used the terms in question precisely in the sense in which they are used in scripture; and secondly, that the doctrine of the total inability of man to save himself, both from the punishment and from the dominion of sin, was the great practical point he had in view. Among the expressions, which he had used, and which were objected to him, we may mention the following: "The assembly of the predestinated is the holy church, which has neither spot nor wrinkle, which Jesus Christ calls his own: a reprobate is never a member of holy church." These and similar passages, produced in accusation against him, he partly admitted as his own; and partly qualified by a fair and candid explanation. On the whole, it is very evident, that he gave offence, by studiously distinguishing those, whom God hath chosen to be his peculiar people in Christ, and are evidently pointed out, by their real practical holi-

ness, as different from the common bulk of nominal christians. Even the pope and his cardinals, if not predestinated,* to him appeared to be no members of the body of Christ. "The church of Christ is," says he, from Bernard, "his own body more evidently, than the body which he delivered for us to death. The church is as it were the "barn floor,† of the Lord, in which are the predestinate and the reprobate, the former being as wheat, and the latter as chaff." In these subjects he followed the ideas of Augustin, with whose writings he appears to have been much acquainted. Divine influence, therefore, implying and involving all the essentials of the gospel according to the views of Augustin, and evidencing itself in particular persons by real humility, piety, and integrity, was one of the grand doctrinal points of John Huss; and this holy man defective as he was in christian light, and obscured with much superstition, was yet enabled to distinguish his scriptural creed from that of the mere religion of nature, both in theory and in practice; and he accordingly underwent that cross of Christ from the persecutions of the wicked, which must ever be expected by those who will not allow merely nominal christianity to be the real religion of Jesus. For it is well known that nothing more irritates those who live according "to the course of this world,"‡ than to be told that God has a holy peculiar people, formed for himself to show forth his praise.

The following passages are extracted from his letters:

"Almighty God will confirm the hearts of his faithful people, whom he hath chosen before the foundation of the world, that they may receive the eternal crown of glory. I am greatly comforted with those words of our Saviour: "Happy are ye when men shall hate you, and shall separate you from their company, &c. O precious consolatory lesson, difficult, indeed, not to understand, but to practise in time of tribulation. Let patience have her perfect work. It is a light

* Romans, viii. 29. † 2 Kings, chap. vi. ver. 27. ‡ Ephesians, chap. ii.

matter to speak of patience, but a great matter to fulfil it. Our most patient champion himself, who knew that he should rise again the third day, and redeem from damnation all his elect, was troubled in spirit. Yet he, though sorely troubled, said to his disciples, let not your hearts be troubled, &c. I trust stedfastly, the Lord will make me a partaker of the crown with you, and with all them who love the Lord Jesus Christ. Merciful Christ! draw us weak creatures after thee; for except thou draw us, we are not able to follow thee. Give us a courageous spirit that it may be ready; for without thee we can do nothing. Give us an upright faith, a firm hope and perfect charity."*

The integrity of the Bohemian martyr was severely tried by the solicitations of several persons. But divine grace had given him the virtue of sincerity to a very eminent degree, so that the very least equivocation was abominable in his eyes. Even his enemy Paletz, inwardly reverencing the virtue of the man, took pains to induce him to retract. Put yourselves in my place, said Huss, what would you do, if you were required to retract certain errors, which you were sure you never held. "I own, it is an hard case," answered Paletz, with tears in his eyes. It is not improbable, that this man had never meant actually to expose his countryman to the flames; and it is extremely probable that he had never before considered the dilemma to which the spirit of persecution must reduce a person of real integrity, namely, either to perjure himself, or to be consumed in the flames. One of the doctors, who visited Huss, said to him, "if the council should tell you, that you have but one eye, though you have really two, you would be obliged to agree with the council." "While God keeps me in my senses," replied Huss, "I would not say such a thing against my conscience, on the intreaty or command of the whole world."

This holy personage foreseeing his end to be near,

* Fox, vol. i. p. 716.

redeemed* the little time which was left to him, by writing letters, which were publicly read at Prague, in his chapel at Bethlehem, the once delightful scene of his ministry. One of these letters may be considered as a farewel sermon addressed to his flock. He intreats them to adhere solely to the word of God, and not to follow himself, if they have observed any thing in him not agreeable to it; and he particularly begs them to pardon him, where he had been guilty of any levity in discourse or behaviour. He begs them to be grateful to John de Chlum and another nobleman, who had been faithful to him in his sufferings. He adds, that he hears no news of Jerom, except that he was a prisoner like himself, waiting for the sentence of death; and he concludes with an earnest prayer that the gospel of Christ may be always preached to them in his dear chapel of Bethlehem. His firmness was that of a christian, not of a stoic; founded in humility, not in pride. He experienced some attacks of the fears of death; but soon recovered his courage. "I am far," said he, "from the strength and zeal of the apostle Peter. Jesus Christ has not given me his talents: besides* I have more violent conflicts, and a greater number of shocks to sustain. I say therefore, that placing all my confidence in Jesus Christ, I am determined when I hear my sentence, to continue stedfast in the truth, even to the death, as the saints and you shall help me." Thus modestly does he write to a friend; and it is, from his private epistolary correspondence, that the most genuine features of his character may be drawn. John Huss appears indeed to have been one of those of whom "the world was not worthy;"† and of no mere man could it ever be said with more propriety, that the world hated him, because he testified of it, that its works were evil. Undoubtedly his open rebukes of sin, both by his public preaching and writings, and by the uniform purity and innocence of his manners, had inflamed the tempers of the great men of the age,

* Ephesians, ver. 16. † Heb. xi. 38.

both in church and state; yet, it was scarcely to be expected, that the council of Constance, should even upon their own principles, proceed, without the least proof of heresy, to condemn to the flames the most upright of men, because he refused to acknowledge that to be true which he believed to be false; or that this same council should justify the deceit and perfidy of their imperial president: their conduct, therefore, is to be considered as a striking proof not only of the general depravity of human nature, but also of the general wickedness and hypocrisy of the Roman church at that time.

The council settled beforehand after what manner he was to be treated, in case he should retract.* He was to have been degraded from the priesthood, and to be forever shut up between four walls. This was the only reward which the unfeeling tyrants had intended to bestow on him, in the event of his wounding his conscience to gratify them. To lay the whole weight of blame on the popes, on account of the enormities of the Roman church, is to view that church superficially. It was generally and systematically corrupt: it had recently deposed three popes; it was, at present, without a pope; and yet could be guilty of crimes, not less heinous than some of the worst, which the popes ever committed.

The council, so Huss wrote the night before his death, exhorted him to pronounce every one of the articles, which had been extracted from his books, to be erroneous: but he absolutely refused to accede to so unreasonable a requisition; except they could, from the scriptures, PROVE his doctrines to be erroneous, as they asserted them to be. It may be proper to have mentioned this circumstance here by way of anticipation, to obviate a misrepresentation which was studiously made concerning John Huss, as if he had PROMISED to retract. On the contrary, it appears that he persisted to the last in the defence of his innocence with UNSHAKEN INTEGRITY.

* L'Enfant, p. 363, vol. i

While the council was preparing the formalities of his condemnation, they enacted a decree to forbid the reception of the communion in both kinds; and assigned no other reason for it, except their regard to the doctrine of transubstantiation; at the same time they owned that, IN THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH, THIS SACRAMENT IN BOTH KINDS WAS RECEIVED BY THE BELIEVERS.* Thus the triumph of the Roman church seemed to be complete. She dared to own, that she contradicted primitive christianity; and she dared to enact that those, who refused to obey HER institutions, though confessedly contrary to those of the primitive church, ought to be treated as heretics! What is this but open, undisguised, opposition to the commands of Jesus Christ? And what other name but that of antichrist can so well express the corrupt and presumptuous domination of the romish hierarchy?

But there is a voice in natural conscience, which it is not in the power of Satan easily to silence. Sigismund, inwardly ashamed of his baseness and perfidy towards Huss, wished to save the life of that good man, though he saw that, according to the wicked policy of the council, this was not to be done, except the prisoner could be induced to forswear himself. Many persons, to second the views of the emperor, endeavoured to overcome the constancy of Huss: even the council sent several deputations to him for that purpose. One of this martyr's letters throws some light on these transactions.† "Paletz," says he, "attempts to persuade me, that I ought to abjure, because of the great advantage which will accrue to me from it. I told him, that to be condemned and burned was not so scandalous, as to be guilty of falsehood." He speaks thus of his other accuser Causis. "That poor man has been often with the deputies before the prison. I heard him say to the guards; if it please God, we shall shortly burn this heretic, who has cost me so many florins in prosecuting him."

* L'Enfant, p. 386, vol. i.

† Ibid. p. 397, vol. i.

He wrote about the same time to a preacher of his acquaintance concerning the decree of the council lately mentioned. "They have condemned the communion of the cup with regard to the laity, as an error, and have condemned of heresy every one, who violates their decree, though they have nothing but custom to oppose to an institution of Jesus Christ."

The council now ordered the works of Huss to be burnt; on occasion of which circumstance, he writes to his friends; "That he was not discouraged on this account; that Jeremiah's books met with the same treatment;† nevertheless the Jews suffered the calamities, which that faithful prophet had foretold. Consider that they have condemned the pope, their God upon earth, for his crimes, particularly for selling indulgences, bishoprics, and the like. But in this they are his accomplices. The bishop of Litomissel, who is at the council, went twice to buy the archbishopric of Prague, but others outbad him. They follow this traffic even at Constance, where one sells and another buys a benefice."

At length he received another solemn deputation, in which were two cardinals and some prelates, who tried their utmost to induce him to recant. Huss, however, persisted in his integrity, and announced his resolution in terms of great vehemence and solemnity. Having withstood one more attempt of the emperor to shake his resolution, he was thus accosted by his friend John de Chlum. "I am a person of no learning, my dear Huss, and unfit to advise so learned a person as you. If you are convinced of any error, I venture however to advise you to retract it; if not, to endure whatever punishment shall be inflicted on you, rather than to do violence to your conscience!" An instance this of common sense and artless honesty, which deserves to be contrasted with the subtilty and intriguing spirit of the council. Huss answered with tears, that he called God to witness, how ready he was to retract sincerely

† Jerem. c. xxxvi.

and upon oath, the moment he was convinced of an error by the testimony of holy scripture. One of the prelates observed, "For my part I am not so presumptuous, as to prefer my private opinion to that of the whole council." "Let the meanest member of that council, replied Huss, convince me of a mistake, and I am perfectly disposed to obey their injunctions." Some of the bishops observed, "See, how obstinate he is in his errors."

He was now presented before the council in the presence of the emperor, the princes of the empire, and of an incredible concourse of people. The bishop of Lodi preached a sermon from those words of St. Paul, "that the body of sin might be destroyed."* With the grossest ignorance or the most virulent and indecent malice he perverted the words to the purpose of the council. "Destroy heresies and errors," said he, "but chiefly that obstinate heretic," pointing to the prisoner. While they were reading the articles extracted or pretended to be extracted from his works, Huss was beginning to answer to each distinctly, but was told that he might answer to them all at the same time, and was ordered at present to be silent. He expostulated against the unreasonableness of this injunction in vain. Lifting up his hands to heaven, he begged the prelates in God's name to indulge him with the freedom of speech, that he might justify himself before the people; after which said he, "you may dispose of me, as you shall think fit." But the prelates persisting in their refusal,† he kneeled down; and with uplifted eyes and hands, and with a loud voice, he recommended his cause to the Judge of all the earth. Being accused in the article of the sacrament of having maintained that the material bread remains after consecration, he loudly declared, that he had never believed or taught so. Nothing could be more iniquitous than this charge, which he had fully refuted on his former examination. But the council was determined to burn him as a here-

* Rom. vi. † p. 421. L'Enfant.

tic, and it behooved them to exhibit at any rate, some show of proving his heretical opinions. A still more shameless accusation was introduced. It was said, "A certain doctor bears witness, that Huss gave out, that he should become the fourth person in the trinity." "What is the name of that doctor," replied the prisoner, protesting against the charge as a flagrant calumny, and making an orthodox confession of his faith on the subject of the trinity. Nevertheless, the bishop, who had read the accusation, refused to mention the doctor's name. Being again upbraided with his appeal to Jesus Christ, "See," said he, with his hands lifted up toward heaven, "most gracious Saviour, how the council condemns as an error what thou hast prescribed and practised, when, overborne by enemies, thou committedst thy cause to God thy Father, leaving us this example, that when we are oppressed, we may have recourse to the judgment of God. Yes, continued he, turning toward the assembly, I have maintained and do still maintain, that an appeal made to Jesus Christ is most just and right, because he can neither be corrupted by bribes, nor be deceived by false witnesses, nor be overreached by any artifice. I came voluntarily to this council, under the public faith of the emperor here present." In pronouncing these last words, he looked earnestly at Sigismund, who blushed at the sudden and unexpected rebuke.*

Sentence was now pronounced against both John Huss and his books; and he was ordered to be degraded. The bishops clothed him with the priests' garments, and put a chalice into his hands. While they were thus employed, he said, that "the Jews put a white garment on our Lord Jesus Christ to mock him, when Herod delivered him to Pilate," and he made reflections of the same kind on each of

* We are told, that when Charles V. was solicited at the diet of Worms to arrest Luther, notwithstanding the safe conduct which he had granted him, he replied, "I should not choose to blush with my predecessor Sigismund." Op. Hus. Tom. ii.

the sacerdotal ornaments. When he was fully apparelled, the prelates once more exhorted him to retract; and to this exhortation he replied with his usual firmness. They then caused him to come down from the stool on which he stood, and pronounced these words, "O cursed Judas, who having forsaken the counsel of peace, art entered into that of the Jews, we take this chalice from thee, in which is the blood of Jesus Christ." But God was with the martyr, who cried aloud, "I trust in the mercy of God, I shall drink of it this very day in his kingdom." Then they stripped him of all his vestments, one after another, uttering a curse on stripping him of each. Having completed his degradation by the addition of some other ridiculous insults not worthy of a distinct relation, they put a paper coronet on his head, on which they had painted three devils with this inscription, ARCHHERETIC, and said, "We devote thy soul to the infernal devils." "I am glad," said the martyr, "to wear this crown of ignominy for the love of him, who wore a crown of thorns."

When the painted paper was placed upon his head, one of the bishops said, "Now we commit thy soul to the devil." "But I," said Huss, "commit my spirit into thy hands, O Lord Jesus Christ, unto thee I commend my spirit which thou hast redeemed."* The council now ordered this sentence to be pronounced, namely, "The holy synod of Constance declares, that John Huss ought to be given up to the secular power, and does accordingly so give him up, considering that the church of God has no more to do with him."

Sigismund committed the execution of Huss to the elector Palatine. The martyr walking amidst his guards, declared his innocence to the people. When he came near the place of execution, he kneeled and prayed with such fervour, that some of the people said aloud, "What this man has done before, we

* Fox, Acts, &c. vol. i. p. 709.

know not; but now we hear him offer up most excellent prayers to God." The elector Palatine prevented him from speaking to the people, and ordered him to be burned. "Lord Jesus," said Huss aloud, "I humbly suffer this cruel death for thy sake, and I pray thee to forgive all my enemies." His paper crown falling from off his head, the soldiers put it* on again, saying, that it must be burnt with the devils, whom he had served. His neck was fastened to the stake, and the wood was piled about him. The elector advanced to exhort him once more on the often repeated subject of retractation. "What I have written and taught," these were the words of Huss, "was in order to rescue souls from the power of the devil, and to deliver them from the tyranny of sin; and I do gladly seal, what I have written and taught, with my blood." The elector withdrawing, the fire was kindled, and Huss was soon suffocated, having called on God as long as he could speak.

Many other circumstances of the cruel indignity with which he was treated, it is not necessary to relate. It is more to our purpose to observe what Æneas Sylvius a roman catholic historian records of John Huss and of Jerom of Prague, "They went," says he, "to the stake, as to a banquet; not a word fell from them, which discovered the least timidity; they sung hymns in the flames to the last gasp without ceasing."

Thus by a death, which has affixed eternal infamy on the council of Constance, slept in Jesus the celebrated John Huss, one of the most upright and blameless of men. Human depravity has not often produced a scene so completely iniquitous, and so much calculated to bring disgrace on the Roman church. The uncommon pains taken to prevent his death by a retractation, demonstrates the conviction of the council, that they were doing what they could not justify to their own consciences. At the same time the grace of God was

* P. 429. L'Enfant,

marvellously displayed in supporting and strengthening the martyr, who appears indeed to have exhibited all the graces of a true disciple of Christ. It has often been said, that good men would not suffer persecution, if they were not so bigoted in points of sentiment. But what shall we say of the case before us? A man of the most irreproachable character suffers the most cruel death, attended with a severe course of insult and indignity, even though he could not be proved to have held any point of doctrine absolutely distinct from the creed of his adversaries; but he was a holy man; and the whole world lieth in wickedness.*

The parts and acquirements of John Huss seem to have been above mediocrity; and yet neither of them are by any means to be ranked in the highest class. A vein of good sense runs through all his writings; insomuch that Luther calls him the most rational expounder of scripture he had ever met with. His natural temper was mild and condescending; all the traces of harshness or severity which are to be found in this reformer must be looked for in his contests with vice. The events of his life prove him to have possessed an exquisite tenderness of conscience, together with great piety and almost unexampled fortitude. Moreover, as the piety of this champion of the faith was perfectly free from enthusiasm or mysticism, so was his fortitude unsullied with vanity or ostentation. A mind of equal energy and resolution, at the same time less scrupulous and conscientious than that of Huss, somewhat less attentive to religious practice, and more inquisitive and solicitous concerning matters of opinion, such a mind, it may be supposed, would probably have got SOONER rid of the chains of superstition. There is, however, good reason to think that he had gained so considerable an insight into the prevailing ecclesiastical abuses, that it was not possible for him to have been held much longer in slavery by papal corruptions. But the wicked decree of the council of Constance shortened his life.

* John, 5. 19.

The council, with Sigismund at their head, still preserved the most solemn forms of religion, though their conduct continued to be destitute of humility, justice, and humanity. Gerson preached a sermon concerning the reformation of the church, the object of which seems to have been, to transfer to the general council, that despotic power, which had been supposed, on divine authority, to rest with the pope. In the mean time Jerom of Prague was repeatedly examined; and he continued to sustain the rigor of his confinement with patience and constancy.

It is remarkable, that a divinity professor, named Bertrand, preached on the necessity of the reformation of the church; and strenuously exhorted the council to use the most speedy and effectual means, to correct abuses: " particularly the insatiable avarice, the excessive ambition, the gross ignorance, the shameful laziness, and the execrable pride of the clergy." The council itself affected to undertake the work of reformation. They could not but be sensible, that the world had a right to expect it from them: but what hopes could be indulged of success from men, who, at the very same time, gloried in their iniquity; and wrote imperious letters into Bohemia, charging the clergy there to use all possible diligence to extirpate the followers of John Huss; that is, the very persons who had been most sincerely zealous in promoting that same reformation of the clergy, which the council pretended to regard as their capital object.

> Non tali auxilio, nec defensoribus istis
> Tempus eget. —— VIRG.

Something even besides solid learning and good sense was requisite for a work of this nature. Gerson excelled in both these qualities. A treatise, which he composed at this time on the trial of spirits, abounds with excellent rules for the detection of feigned revelations and visions, and contributed to prevent the canonization of some pretended saints. But there was

not in the council the *unction from the holy One, of which St. John speaks; that is, the true faith of Christ and real christian humility were not the ruling principles in the famous assembly at Constance.

Toward the latter end of the same year 1415, a letter was sent to the council from Bohemia signed by about sixty principal persons, barons, noblemen, and others of Bohemia,† an extract of which is as follows; "We know not from what motive ye have condemned John Huss, bachelor of divinity, and preacher of the gospel. Ye have put him to a cruel and ignominious death, though convicted of no heresy. We wrote in his vindication to Sigismund, king of the Romans. This apology of ours ought to have been communicated to your congregations; but we have been told that ye burnt it in contempt of us. We protest therefore, with the heart as well as with the lips, that John Huss was a man very honest, just, and orthodox; that for many years he conversed among us with godly and blameless manners; that during all those years he explained, to us and to our subjects, the gospel and the books of the old and new testament, according to the exposition of holy doctors approved by the church; and that he has left writings behind him in which he constantly abhors all heresy. He taught us also to detest every thing heretical. In his discourses he constantly exhorted us to the practice of peace and charity, and his own life exhibited to us a distinguished example of these virtues. After all the inquiry which we have made, we can find no blame attached to the doctrine or to the life of the said John Huss; but on the contrary every thing pious, laudable, and worthy of a true pastor. Ye have not only disgraced us by his condemnation, but have also unmercifully imprisoned, and perhaps already put to death Jerom of Prague, a man of most profound learning and copious eloquence. Him also ye have condemned unconvicted. Notwithstanding all that hath passed, we are resolved to sacri-

* 1 John, ii 20. † L'Enfant, p. 506. vol. i.

fice our lives for the defence of the gospel of Christ, and of his faithful preachers." This letter was unanimously approved in an assembly of Bohemian lords held at Prague.

John de Trocznow, chamberlain to Wenceslaus, king of Bohemia, known by the name of Zisca, or the oneeyed, was one of the Bohemian noblemen, who highly resented the base conduct of the council. Wenceslaus asking him one day what he was musing upon, I was thinking, said he, on the affront offered to our kingdom by the death of John Huss. "It is out of your power or mine, to revenge it," said the king; "but if you know which way to do it, exert yourself." From that time Zisca meditated those military projects, for which he was afterwards so famous in history.

The council, startled at the expostulations of the Bohemian lords, yet being still determined to maintain their own unjust authority, at length, partly by promises, and partly by threatenings, induced Jerom of Prague to retract his sentiments. To carry this point they appear to have used their utmost efforts. Nor is it difficult to comprehend their motives. They were anxious to avoid the infamy, which would unavoidably be connected with their execution of another great and good man. Jerom's retractation was at first ambiguous and equivocal, afterwards explicit and circumstantial. He anathematized the articles both of Wickliff and of Huss, and declared that he believed every thing which the council believed. He even added, that if in future any doctrine should escape from him contrary to his recantation, he would submit to everlasting punishment! Thus was disgraced before all the world, and humbled in his own eyes, a man of most excellent morals, of superior parts, and of great learning and fortitude. Reader! this is an event, memorable in the annals of human imbecility. Consider diligently the instruction it affords. The power and the mercy of God, in owning his fallen servant, and in afterwards restoring and supporting him, were magnified, in this instance, in a very striking manner.

Jerom, notwithstanding his retractation, was remanded to prison, where, however, we find he was allowed a little more liberty than before.*

The council, during these transactions, made a constant parade of reforming the church. On Sundays and holidays, sermons were preached on that subject from time to time. One preacher said, "When a prelate is consecrated, they ask him if he knows the old and new testament. Most of them, I will venture to say, cannot affirm this with a safe conscience." This same preacher inveighed in general, with great vehemence against the vices of the clergy, which he might do with little danger to his own person, and with as little probability of profiting his audience, because he always took care at the same time to assert the unlimited power of the pope. Other sermons, to the same purport, were preached, in which the wickedness of the clergy were so keenly reproved, that we cannot but conclude that their manners must have been at that time licentious beyond measure. Dr. Abendon of Oxford particularly exhorted bishops and other superior clergymen to apply themselves to the study of the scriptures, rather than to the litigious and lucrative science of the canon law. He inveighed against the nonresidence and the simony of the prelates. The council by their silence could bear to give a sanction to these exhortations, though they had just before condemned to the flames a pastor, who had been singularly exempt from all these vices. There were also those, who, not content with the unhappy retractation of Jerom, insisted upon his being tried a second time; and Gerson himself, with his usual zeal against heresy, was not ashamed to use his utmost efforts in promoting this most iniquitous measure.

The council actually proceeded to examine Jerom again upon the articles formerly exhibited against him, and also upon fresh articles, collected in Bohemia by certain carmelite friars, and now for the first time

* L'Enfant. p. 513. vol. i

brought forward. The prisoner refused to be sworn, because they denied him the liberty of defence.

Then it was that this great man, whom a long series of affliction and cruel persecution, and above all, the consciousness of his late prevarication had brought into the lowest distress, began to exhibit that strength of mind, that force of genius and eloquence, and that integrity and fortitude, which will be the admiration of all ages. How bitterly he had repented in secret, and mourned over his fall, and with what exercises of soul he had been disciplined in secret, the intelligent christian may easily conceive, though we have no particular account on record. We know indeed, that after he had acted against his conscience, he retired from the council with a heavy heart. His chains had been taken from him, but the load was transferred from his body to his mind; and the caresses of those about him served only to mock his sorrow. The anguish of his own reflections rendered his prison a more gloomy solitude than he had ever found it before. Jerom, however, was not an apostate; and the God whom he served, had compassion on the infirmities of his nature, and did not desert him in his humiliation. No; he made his latter end to be blessed and glorious.

" How unjust is it," exclaimed this christian hero, " that ye will not hear me! Ye have confined me three hundred and forty days in several prisons, where I have been cramped with irons, almost poisoned with dirt and stench, and pinched with the want of all necessaries. During this time ye always gave to my enemies a hearing, but refused to hear me so much as a single hour. I wonder not, that, since ye have indulged them with so long and so favourable an audience, they should have had the address to persuade you, that I am a heretic, an enemy to the faith, a persecutor of the clergy, and a villain. Thus prejudiced ye have judged me unheard, and ye still refuse to hear me. Remember however, that ye are but men; and as such ye are fallible, and may suffer others to impose on you. It is said, that all learning and all wisdom is

collected in this council. The more then does it behoove you to take heed that ye act not rashly, lest ye should be found to act unjustly. I know that it is the design of this council to inflict sentence of death upon me. But when all is done, I am an object of small importance, who must die sooner or later. Therefore what I say is more for your sakes than my own. It ill becomes the wisdom of so many great men to pass an unjust decree against me, and by this to establish a precedent for consequences much more pernicious than my death can be." The council was so far moved by his reasonings, that they resolved, after he had answered to the articles, to grant him liberty of speech. All the articles were read to him, one after another; and his answers were delivered with an acuteness and dexterity, which astonished the court. When he was upbraided with the grossest calumnies, he stood up, with extended hands, and in a sorrowful tone cried out, " Which way, fathers, shall I turn? whom shall I call upon for help, or to bear witness to my innocence? Shall I make my address to you? But my persecutors have intirely alienated your minds from me by saying that I am myself a persecutor of my judges. If ye give them credit, I have nothing to hope for." But, it being impossible to bring the affair to an issue at that time because of the number of the accusations, the court was adjourned to another day.*

The former examination took place on May 23d, 1416, and he was called again before the council according to adjournment, on the succeeding 26th of the same month. On that day the remaining articles were read to him. After he had answered all the charges, owning some, denying others, and clearing up the rest, he was told, that though he had been convicted of heresy by proofs and witnesses most unexceptionable, yet they gave him liberty to speak, so that he might defend himself or retract; only, if he persisted in his errors, he must expect judgment without mercy.

* P. 596. ibid.

Jerom, having gained this liberty of speech, though with much difficulty and opposition, determined to avail himself of the opportunity. He began with invoking the grace of God so to govern his heart and his lips that he might advance nothing but what should conduce to the salvation of his soul. " I am not ignorant," continued he, " that many excellent men have been borne down by false witnesses, and unjustly condemned." He proved this from various instances adduced both from sacred and profane history. " Moses," said he, " was often scandalized by his brethren; Joseph was sold through envy; and afterwards imprisoned upon false reports. Isaiah, Daniel, and almost all the prophets were unjustly persecuted. And was not John the Baptist, Jesus Christ himself, and most of his apostles, put to death as ungodly, seditious persons? In other books as well as the bible we have similar instances. Socrates was most unjustly condemned by his countrymen; he might indeed have saved his life by doing violence to his conscience, but he preferred death to a disingenuous recantation. Plato, Anaxagoras, Zeno, and many others, were maltreated in various ways. " It is a shameful thing," continued Jerom, " for one priest to be condemned unjustly by another; but the height of iniquity is, when this is done by a council, and a college of priests." He gave so probable an account of the reasons of the malice of his adversaries, that for some moments he seemed to have convinced his judges. " I came here of my own accord," said he, " to justify myself, which a man conscious of guilt would scarcely have done. Those who know the course of my life and studies, know that my time has been spent in exercises and works of a very different tendency from any thing wicked or heretical. As to my sentiments, the most learned men of all times have had different opinions concerning religion; they disputed about it, not to combat the truth, but to illustrate it. St. Augustin, and his contemporary St. Jerom, were not always of the same opinion, yet were not on that account ac-

cused of heresy. I shall make no apology for my sentiments, because I am not conscious of maintaining any error, nor shall I retract, because it becomes not me to retract the false accusations of my enemies." He then extolled John Huss, vindicated the innocence of that holy martyr, and declared that he was ready to suffer after his example. "This pastor," said he, "by finding fault with the abuses of the clergy, and the pride of the prelates, did not act against the church of God." He declared that he hoped one day to see his accusers, and to call them to judgment before the tribunal of the sovereign judge of the world. He accused the council of an act of high injustice in trying him a second time on the same indictment, and declared that he should never acknowledge the authority of the new commissioners, but should look on them as judges* sitting in the chair of PESTILENCE. "I came," said he, "to Constance to defend John Huss, because I had advised him to go thither, and had promised to come to his assistance, in case he should be oppressed. Nor am I ashamed here to make public confession of my own cowardice. I confess, and tremble while I think of it, that through fear of punishment by fire, I basely consented against my conscience to the condemnation of the doctrine of Wickliff and Huss." He then declared that he disowned his recantation, as the greatest crime of which he had ever been guilty; and that he was determined to his last breath to adhere to the principles of those two men, which were as sound and pure, as their lives were holy and blameless. He excepted indeed Wickliff's opinion of the sacrament, and declared his agreement with the Roman church in the article of transubstantiation. Having concluded his speech, he was carried back to prison, and was there visited by several persons, who hoped to reclaim him, but in vain.

On May 30th, Jerom being brought again before the council, the bishop of Lodi preached a sermon

* P. 585. ibid.

from these words, "he upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart."* He exhorted the prisoner not to show himself incorrigible, as he had hitherto done. He paid some tribute of praise to his extraordinary abilities, and at the same time extolled the lenity and generosity with which he had been treated by the council. The reader, now in possession of the facts, might smile at this gross flattery, if the subject were less grave and less affecting. Jerom, raising himself on a bench, undertook to confute the preacher. He declared again, that he had done nothing in his whole life, of which he so bitterly repented, as his recantation; that he revoked it from his very soul, as also the letter which he had been induced to write on that subject to the Bohemians; that he had been guilty of the meanest falsehood by making that recantation; and that he esteemed John Huss a holy man. At the same time he declared, that he knew no heresy to which Huss was attached, unless they should call by that name his open disapprobation of the vices of the clergy; and that if after this declaration credit should still be given to the false witness borne against him, he should consider the fathers of the council themselves as unworthy of all belief. "This pious man," said Jerom, alluding to John Huss, "could not bear to see the revenues of the church, which were principally designed for the maintenance of the poor, and for works of liberality, spent in debauchery with women, in feasts, hounds, furniture, gawdy apparel, and other expenses, unworthy of christianity."

The firmness, eloquence, and zeal of Jerom, sensibly affected the council. They proposed to him once more to retract. But he replied, "Ye have determined to condemn me unjustly; but after my death I shall leave a sting in your consciences, and a worm that shall never die. I appeal to the sovereign Judge of all the earth, in whose presence you must appear to answer me." After sentence had been pronounced against him,

* Mark, xvi.

he was delivered to the secular power. He was treated with scorn and insult, similar to that which his friend Huss had experienced. He put the mitre with his own hands on his head,* saying that he was glad to wear it for the sake of him, who was crowned with one of thorns. As he went to execution, he sung the apostles' creed, and the hymns of the church, with a loud voice and a cheerful countenance. He kneeled at the stake, and prayed. Being then bound, he raised his voice, and sung a paschal hymn then much in vogue in the church.†

> Hail! happy day, and ever be adored,
> When hell was conquered by great heaven's Lord.

The executioner approaching to the pile behind his back, lest Jerom should see him, "Come forward," said the martyr to him, "and put fire to it before my face."‡ He continued alive in the flames a full quarter of an hour. And there is the most unanimous testimony given by all writers, hussite and roman catholic, to the heroic courage and fortitude with which he sustained the torment. When he was much scorched with the fury of the fire, and almost smothered in its flame, he was heard to cry out, "O Lord God, have mercy on me! have mercy on me!" And a little afterward, "Thou knowest how I have loved thy truth." By and by, the wind parted the flames, and exhibited his body full of large blisters, a dreadful spectacle to the beholders; yet even then his lips are said to have continued still moving, as if his mind was actuated by intense devotion.

Poggius, a celebrated Florentine, who had been the secretary of John XXIII. and was present at these scenes, has left the most unequivocal testimony to the abilities, fortitude, and eloquence of Jerom. I have already given the most material historical facts, which he mentions.

* L'Enfant, vol. i. p. 591.

† Salve, festa dies, toto venerabilis ævo,
Qua Deus infernum vicit, et astra tenens.

‡ L'Enfant, vol. i. p. 599.

"I confess," says this writer, "I never knew the art of speaking carried so near the model of ancient eloquence. It was amazing to hear with what force of expression, fluency of language, and excellent reasoning he answered his adversaries; nor was I less struck with the gracefulness of his manner, the dignity of his action, and the firmness and constancy of his whole behaviour. It grieved me to think so great a man was labouring under so atrocious an accusation. Whether this accusation be just or not, God knows: I make no inquiry into the merits of the case; I rest satisfied with the decision of my superiors."

"The assembly," continues Poggius, "was very unruly and indecent; yet it is incredible with what acuteness the prisoner answered, and with what surprising dexterity he warded off every stroke of his adversaries. Nothing escaped him: his whole behaviour was truly great and pious.

He took great pains to show that very little credit was due to the witnesses produced against him. He laid open the sources of their hatred to him; and in that way made a strong impression on the minds of his hearers. He lamented the cruel and unjust death of that holy man John Huss, and said he was armed with a full resolution to follow the steps of that blessed martyr.

It was impossible to hear this pathetic orator without emotion. Every ear was captivated, and every heart touched. Throughout his whole oration he showed a most amazing strength of memory. He had been confined almost a year in a dungeon, the severity of which usuage he complained of, but in the language of a great and good man. In this horrid place he was deprived of books and paper, yet notwithstanding this, and the constant anxiety of his mind, he was no more at a loss for proper authorities and quotations, than if he had spent the intermediate time at leisure in his study.

His voice was sweet and full, and his action every way proper to express either indignation or to raise

pity; but he made no affected application to the passions. Firm and intrepid he stood before the council; collected in himself, and not only contemning, but seeming desirous of death. The greatest character in ancient story could not possibly have exceeded him. If there be any justice in history, this man will be admired by all posterity. I call him a prodigious man, and the epithet is not extravagant. I was an eyewitness of his whole behaviour, and could easily be more prolix on a subject so copious."*

Such is the testimony of this ingenuous papist to an adversary. His friend Aretin, to whom he wrote the letter of which the above is an extract, was much less candid. "You attribute," says he, "to this man more than I could wish. You ought at least to WRITE more cautiously of these things." It has been well observed† that Poggius would probably have written more cautiously, had he written a few days afterward. But his letter is dated on the very day of Jerom's execution. It came warm from the writer's heart, and proves sufficiently what HE thought of the council of Constance and their proceedings.

Notwithstanding this valuable memoir, I could wish to have been enabled to give a more edifying account of the martyrdom of Jerom: but in this point the materials of history are defective. We must ever expect that writers will record what they esteem important; and pass over what they conceive is better buried in oblivion. Unless, therefore, they have some taste for evangelical principles, and evangelical practice, they will take no notice of many things, which to them appear bordering upon fanaticism or enthusiasm. In the instance before us, indeed, it is very probable, that Jerom himself had no very accurate or systematical acquaintance with the truth of the gospel. The knowledge, however, which he had, doubtless respected the essential doctrines of christianity; and his spirit and constancy in suffering, his dependence on the

* Letter of Poggius to Aretin. † Gilpin's Jerom.

grace of Christ, his joyful expectation of a blessed resurrection, and his humble confession of sinfulness and unworthiness, sufficiently distinguish him from the stoic philosopher, or the mere moralist, who, whatever portion he may have of the first of these qualities, is totally void of all the rest. It is remarkable, that Poggius observes, in the same letter, that "Jerom met his fate with a cheerful countenance and with more than stoical constancy."

Among other valuable purposes to which the council of Constance was rendered subservient under divine providence, this was not of the least importance, that the wickedness of the ecclesiastical system, then prevalent in Europe, was demonstrated before all the world. All the knowledge and ability, which Europe could afford, was collected at Constance, yet the able and learned fathers of this council were so far from reforming the evils of what they called the church, that they proved it to be antichrist more certainly than ever. It could no longer be said, that the particular character of such or such popes was the cause of the crimes of the clergy; the whole of the then clerical establishment concurred in support of iniquity.

I have already taken notice of the confession, which in the sermon preached at Constance, they themselves made of the extreme wickedness of the church. Another remarkable instance of the same kind occurred on Whitsunday, the seventh of June, a very little time after the death of Jerom. A doctor preached a sermon from these words: "They were all filled with the Holyghost." "Instead of the seven gifts," says the preacher, "which God granted to the apostles, I fear that the devil keeps his pentecost in the hearts of most of the clergy, and that he has inspired them with the seven contrary vices." He then gave a catalogue of those vices.

But let not malicious infidelity exult in these incontrovertible proofs of the corrupt state of the church. One of the essential doctrines of christianity, namely, original sin, or the native depravity of man, as an

apostate creature, is strongly illustrated by the general wickedness of merely nominal christians. The real gospel itself was then neither understood, nor preached, nor valued in the Roman church. Hence the natural wickedness of mankind met with no resistance; even the papists could see that the whole church was vicious in its head and members, yet they trifled respecting sins with the most scandalous levity, and persecuted to death those very persons, who earnestly opposed the corruption of the times.

All this, however, affords no just ground of triumph to the infidel. The mere nominal christian is, in a scriptural sense, an unbeliever as well as himself; and while neither of these characters OVERCOMES THE WORLD, because he has not true FAITH,* it is abundantly evident, and I trust it has appeared so from the course of this history, that where real christianity is understood, and received, there sincerity, and all genuine virtues do actually thrive, and adorn the gospel.

In the year 1417, on the day of Epiphany, a sermon was preached in full council, which described the abuses of the church in so strong a manner, that if the preacher had intended to justify the reformation, attempted by Huss and Jerom, and completed a hundred years after in several parts of Europe by the protestant reformers, he could not have added much to the vehemence of his invectives. The clergy were by him taxed with pride and the love of power, with the bad distribution of benefices, the maladministration of the sacraments, the neglect of the study of the scriptures and of the preaching of the gospel, and the injustice of their ecclesiastical decrees. "Abomination," cried he, "appears even within these walls, nor are we without instances both of the most scandalous passions, and the basest actions." Could a preacher have been permitted with impunity to draw so frightful a picture of the face of the church in full council, if it

* 1 John, v. 4, 5.

had not been corrupt in the extreme, and must there not have been a radical apostacy from the real faith of Christ, where such fruits were suffered to abound?

In this year the followers of Huss, under the famous Zisca and Nicolas de Hussinetz, began to exert themselves in opposition to the hierarchy, but certainly in a manner by no means agreeable to the genius of christianity. They made use of fire and sword; and the latter of these leaders is said* to have collected together in a mountain, which was afterwards called Tabor,† forty thousand hussites, to have arranged them in companies, and administered to them the communion in both kinds. This last point of ecclesiastical regulation seems to have been the predominant article of the faith of the majority of the party, so little did they understand the nature of the gospel! It was indeed the great defect of this whole Bohemian reformation, that, zealous as it was against the popish abominations, it entered not into the genuine, essential, doctrines of the gospel with energy and perspicuity; and thus, as must ever be the case, while external practice is the principal object, these reformers were not able to improve, in any considerable degree, that very practice to which they directed their chief attention. Instead of laying the axe to the root, instead of expounding the doctrines of grace, and preaching the real faith of Christ, and patiently suffering persecution, they took the cause into their own hands, and avenged themselves of their enemies by the sword. Their ill success in the issue, compared with the decisive victories gained over popery afterwards at the reformation by those who preached the real scripture doctrine of justification before God, and who allowed the use of no other arms against popery than "FAITH WHICH WORKETH BY LOVE," gives us a salutary lesson, how upon all occasions, in this earthly scene of

* Dubravius.

† The hussites erected tents in the mountain. And the word Tabor means TENT in the Bohemian language. The mountain Tabor is only a few miles from Prague.

the trial of the patience and resignation of the righteous, divine truth ought to be defended. To be incited by a zeal, however flaming, against the errors and evils of popery, is not sufficient: it behooves the christian champion to fight with spiritual, not with carnal weapons, to regulate his zeal by christian knowledge, humility, faith, meekness, and patience, and to aim chiefly at the purification of the heart by the practical use of the doctrine of Christ crucified, under the influence of the divine Spirit. But in these things the hussites were poorly furnished; and they miscarried, because they attempted to cleanse the OUTSIDE OF THE CUP AND PLATTER, before they had cleansed that WHICH IS WITHIN.*

It was a gloomy season of the church when the majority of those, who had the greatest sincerity in religion, made their capital object to be a† sacramental circumstance, though certainly scriptural and perfectly well founded. The fact is, they understood very little of the native depravity of man, on which the use and necessity of the gospel depend. A gloomy season truly! when two men, of talents and learning, and uncommonly honest and upright, lost their lives for the support of a good conscience; and when even these, who, it is not to be doubted, died in the faith of Jesus, possessed little clearness of understanding in that faith, and were encumbered with so much rubbish of superstition as to be incapable of giving clear and effectual instruction to their followers and admirers. And further, when the general mass of christians, even all the dignitaries assembled at Constance, could do no more than acknowledge the necessity of reformation, while many of them constantly practised the foulest abominations, and were ready to burn in the flames as heretics any persons, whose knowledge, and zeal, and morals, and conduct, conveyed, by a laudable contrast, a censure on their own principles and practice. The preciousness of real gospel light,

* Matt. xxvii. 26. † Communion in both kinds.

and the duty of cherishing and obeying it, when it is once understood, was never more strikingly evinced.

Whether this account may be thought to bear too hard upon the character of the clergy at that time in general, and of the council in particular, let the reader judge when he has attended to a few extracts from a sermon of Bernard, a French abbot. This divine told the council, that, "with very few exceptions, they were an assembly of pharisees, who made a farce of religion and the church, under the mask of processions, and other external acts of devotion. "I am sorry," proceeds he, "to say it, that in our days the catholic faith is reduced to nothing; hope is turned into a rash presumption, and the love of God and our neighbour is quite extinct. Among the laity, falsehood bears the chief sway; and avarice predominates among the clergy. Among the prelates there is nothing but malice, iniquity, &c. At the pope's court there is no sanctity; lawsuits and quarrels being the felicity of that court, and imposture its delight." He then exhorted them to make a real reformation, to punish the guilty, and to choose a good pope. This zealous preacher saw not the root of all these evils, namely, the lamentable departure from christian principles; and, like many other declaimers against vice, he knew no remedy but the arguments of mere moral suasion and external discipline. The power of the blood of Christ, in purging the conscience* from dead works to serve the living God, seems to have been generally unknown at that time; and, till men are brought to know something of their own native depravity, they are always too proud to submit to the righteousness of God.†

We have already mentioned the beginning of the intestine distractions in Bohemia. These proceeded to such a length as to produce scenes perfectly tragical. The university of Prague declared in favour of the communion in both kinds, and the greatest part of

* Heb. ix. † Rom. x.

both the clergy and laity followed their decision. Wenceslaus the king, more out of fear than good will to the hussites, granted them a great many churches, in which they administered the eucharist according to the scriptural institution, and also entered every day into new engagements not to obey the council. By these means, many of the Bohemian clergy were stripped of their revenues, and they stirred up the friends of the church of Rome to oppose the innovations. Vast numbers of highwaymen and banditti took the opportunity of this confusion to exercise all acts of violence and robbery with impunity. Wenceslaus, instead of exerting the requisite authority, abandoned Prague, retired to a castle, and minded nothing but his pleasures, while his whole kingdom was in combustion.*

It was not probable that the council of Constance should be able to restore peace and good order to Bohemia: for they themselves, in a great measure had been the cause of the existing troubles. It is, however true, that they left no stone unturned in their endeavours to reestablish the corrupt custom of administering the sacrament in one kind only. By their order, Gerson composed a treatise against the communion in both kinds, which was publicly read in the assembly; but which, in fact, was little calculated to compose the differences. Conscious of the difficulty of supporting his main point by the authority of scripture alone, he observes, that in order to understand revelation aright, recourse should be had to human laws, decrees, and the glosses of holy doctors. He maintains, that those who presume to interpret scripture, contrary to what is taught in the scripture, as DECLARED BY THE CHURCH, and observed by the faithful, ought to be severely punished, rather than dealt with by argument. The whole treatise was unworthy of the learning and sagacity of Gerson, and deserved no notice here, except for the purpose of

* Theobald's War of the Hussites.

showing under what strong delusions those are permitted to lie, who love not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness. The judicious L'Enfant, who is rarely liberal in his censures, breaks out on occasion of the last mentioned sentiment of Gerson, in the following terms: "I own, I don't understand Gerson's logic on this occasion. He draws a very blunt and rash inference; especially as it was the most improper thing in the world he could say to induce the hussites of Bohemia to come to Constance, whither they were summoned."

The five nations, (for the Spaniards were now added to the French, the Germans, the English, and the Italians,) proceeded to elect a pope; and the choice fell upon Othe de Colonna, who took the name of Martin V. This happened in the latter end of the year 1417. All these nations, on the day after the pope's coronation, concurred in a resolution to demand of the new pope the reformation of the church which he had promised to make after he should be elected. He gave them good words, but did nothing effectual. The Germans were uneasy at his delays, and so were the French; though these, by joining with the Italians and the Spaniards, had caused the deferring of the reformation till after the election of a pope. The answer, which Sigismund gave to the French, was severe, but just. "When I urged you that the church might be reformed before the pope was elected, you would not consent. You would have a pope before the reformation. Go to him yourselves. I have not the same power which I had while the see was vacant."* It is the office of history to do justice to all characters; on which account it behooves us to declare, that Sigismund, grossly perfidious as he had shown himself in regard to Huss, appears to have been sincerely desirous of a partial reformation in the church. He had neither the knowledge nor the zeal, sufficient to lead him to any thing like an evangelical reformation; but, with many other popish princes, he

* L'Enfant, vol. ii. p. 297.

wished to set bounds to the tyranny of the pope, to reduce him from the state of a despot to that of a limited monarch, to check his encroachments on the rights and property both of sovereigns and of subjects, and to bring the church into a state of decorum and order. Sigismund certainly intended all this; and if he failed of obtaining the blessing of God even on his laudable purposes, the christian reader will recollect that this man persecuted the church of God, lived wickedly, and hated the real principles of the gospel of Christ. Before the election of Martin V., the emperor, with the Germans and the English, was zealous that the reformation of the church should precede the election of a new pontiff; and Robert Halam, bishop of Salisbury, had distinguished himself particularly in this point. He was the favourite of the emperor; but his death at Constance gave a fatal blow to the designs of those who were anxious to oppose the ambition of the Italians. Not only the French, but even the English, strenuous as they had been for the correction of abuses while Halam lived, deserted the emperor; and he was left in a minority with his Germans. The memorial of this last nation deserves to be mentioned. They complained, that " the popes had assumed to themselves the judgment of all causes both ecclesiastical and civil; that, by a horrid abuse even more scandalous than simony, they taxed and rated crimes like merchandize; selling pardons of sins for ready money, and granting indulgences altogether unusual; that they admitted persons of licentious manners into sacred orders, and that since offices were become thus saleable, no one thought knowledge and virtue to be necessary qualifications."

It is extraordinary, that any modern writers should undertake to vindicate the papacy from the charges of protestants, when it appears repeatedly, that nothing could be said worse of it by its enemies, than what was confessed by the very members of the church of Rome. It is very true that the conduct of these members of the romish church was in the main inconsistent with their professions and declarations. With what

face could these Germans charge Huss with heresy, for saying the very same things which they themselves did? And why should Luther be condemned as too severe against the practice of indulgences, when he only represented that grand corruption in the same light, in which it had been openly represented by his ancestors in this council? But so imperious were the Italian cardinals, that they used very threatening language, accusing both the emperor, and those who favoured his views, of heresy. They also added craft to their menaces, and by degrees drew over the German deputies themselves to their party; and at length Sigismund, being left alone, consented that the choice of a pope should be previous to the reformation. This was all that the Italians desired: for Martin and his cardinals contrived to elude the wishes of the nations for reform. And thus, the French, who, with Gerson as their adviser, had condemned the upright servants of God; the Germans, who, with Sigismund at their head, had supported the accusation against them; and the English, who had persecuted the followers of Wickliff, and joined in the cry against Huss and Jerom; all these very deservedly became the dupes of papal artifice, and the nations were destined for another century to groan under one of the most intolerable of all governments. The glory of God, the truths of the gospel, and the real kingdom of Jesus Christ being kept out of sight by all parties, none of them regarding reformation much further than it concerned their own interested views, nothing that deserved the name of reformation ensued. Among the valuable lessons to be learnt from the history of the council of Constance, this is one; namely, Those who really mean to serve God and his Christ, and to profit mankind in religion, whether they be pastors, or synods, must begin, if the people be in a state of ignorance, with explaining the written word of God; they must plainly set forth the essential doctrines of salvation by Jesus Christ, and then erect the whole structure of their reformation upon those doctrines.

How void the council was of all true knowledge of the scripture doctrines of salvation, will appear from the bull, by which the pope dissolved that assembly. An extract of it is as follows: " Martin, bishop, servant of the servants of God,—at the request of the sacred council, we dismiss it.—Moreover, by the authority of Almighty God, and of the blessed apostles St. Peter and St. Paul, and by our own authority, we grant to all the members of the council plenary absolution of all their sins once in their lives, so that every one of them, within two months after the notification of this privilege has come to his knowledge, may enjoy the benefit of the said absolution in form. We also grant them the same privilege in the moment of death; and we extend it to the domestics, as well as to the masters, on condition, that from the day of the notification, both the one and the other fast every Friday, during a whole year, for the absolution granted to them while alive; and another year for their absolution in the moment of death, unless there be some lawful impediment, in which case they shall do other works of piety. And after the second year they shall be obliged to fast on Fridays during life, or to do some other acts of piety, on pain of incurring the displeasure of Almighty God and of the blessed apostles St. Peter and St. Paul."

I hasten to close the history of this council, because in the latter part of their proceedings there is little that falls within my plan. Martin V., by making agreements with the nations separately, found means to defeat all attempts after any thing that might deserve the name of a general and effectual reformation. But though this new pontiff seemed reluctant and dilatory in correcting abuses, he soon discovered a disposition sufficiently active in supporting his own authority.

He persecuted the hussites most vigorously. These were divided into two bodies, the calixtines,* who differed from the church of Rome only in the affair of

* From calix the cup.

the new communion in both kinds; and the taborites mentioned above, who are thought to have much resembled the waldenses. A greater encomium, the circumstances of those times being fully considered, could scarcely be passed upon them. But, it is difficult to reconcile this encomium with the accounts of their military ferocity. Most probably, wheat was mixed with the tares; and while one part of the people lived the life of "the faith of the Son of God,"* the other could produce few marks of zeal in the cause of religion, except those, which were of a bloody and violent kind.

Under the auspices of the council of Constance paganism was extirpated in Samogitia by the king of Poland. Historical justice required that this fact should be mentioned: yet, I know no evidences of real conversion among the Samogitians; but, the very introduction of christian formalities among idolaters ought to be esteemed, on the whole, a considerable advantage to a nation.

This celebrated council, which began to sit in 1414, was dissolved in 1418.

If the materials of evangelical history appear by no means in quantity proportioned to the length of this chapter, the importance of the salutary lessons, connected with the information it contains, may be thought a sufficient apology for the defect. A great effort was made by the united wisdom of Europe, but in vain, to effect that reformation, which God alone in his own time produced in such a manner, as to illustrate the divine declaration, namely, Salvation is † "not by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."

* Gal. xi. 20 † Zech. iv. 6

CHAP. III.

The Hussites till the beginning of the Reformation.

WE have seen with what indignation the Bohemians heard of the murder of John Huss and Jerom of Prague. To this cause historians ascribe the commencement of the hussite war, which was carried on by the enraged Bohemians for three years under the famous Zisca, and for ten years after his death.

The historian of the church of Christ withdraws from a scene, crowded with almost incredible victories over the emperor, and with inhuman cruelties on both sides. The main body of the discontented Bohemians were at length satisfied with the liberty of the cup in the sacrament, and with the administration of the ordinance in their own language. These points, after the effusion of a deluge of blood, were given up by the papal party in the year 1433, and a treaty of peace was made, of which these formed the basis. In other respects, the calixtines resembled the papists, by whose artifices they were induced even to persecute the genuine followers of Huss. These last mentioned, the true hussites, besides the scriptural celebration of the sacrament, desired to see a real reformation of the church, and the establishment of purity of doctrine and discipline. But, after a long series of military confusion, they found themselves still a persecuted body of men; and those of them, who had been inclined to have recourse to the sword, were gradually convinced, that patient faith and perseverance in prayer are the proper arms of a christian soldier. Never indeed was there a more striking instance of the inefficacy of carnal weapons in defending the church of Christ. The Bohemians had carried on war for thirteen years, often with great success, and always with undaunted courage and fortitude; and in the end, they gained only

two privileges, merely of an external nature in the administration of the Lord's supper. With these the majority of the people remained content, and still adhered to the papal abominations, while the real christians were exposed as much as ever to the persecutions of the church of Rome, and were not only abandoned, but also cruelly treated by their brethren.

In the mean time the council of Basil succeeded that of Constance. But the reader who has with me examined the motives which appear to have influenced the last mentioned council will not perhaps be disposed to take the same pains with that of Basil, which was conducted on a similar plan of secular intrigue and ambition. Among its other objects, the reduction of Bohemia to the papal system was not forgotten; and Rokyzan, a calixtine, was allured, by the hopes of the archbishopric of Prague, to second the views of the papal party. He was elected archbishop in 1436, and laboured to induce the Bohemians to be content without the cup, and in all other things to conform to the romish doctrine and worship.

The genuine followers of Huss, were, however, not without hopes of engaging him to promote a more complete reformation. His sister's son, Gregory, who was in a great measure the founder of the unity of the hussite brethren, solicited him in the most pressing manner to promote vital godliness. But Rokyzan, though he had light enough to approve of the pious intentions of his nephew, could not, through fear of losing his archiepiscopal dignity, be prevailed on to oppose the Romish corruptions; yet, he advised the hussites, to edify one another in private, and gave them some good books for that purpose. He also obtained for them, permission to withdraw to the lordship of Lititz, on the confines of Silesia and Moravia, and there to regulate their plan of worship according to their own consciences.

About the year 1453, a number of hussites repaired to Lititz, and chose Michael Bradazius for their minister. He with some assistants, under the direction

of Gregory, held a conference in 1457, in which the plan of the hussite church, or that of the united brethren was formed, idolatrous rites were prohibited, and a strictness of discipline, resembling that of the primitive christian church, was instituted. Discipline indeed, was a favourite object of this people; and if their attention to this subordinate circumstance had been connected with what is of much greater moment, (an accurate and luminous system of christian doctrine,) far more salutary consequences would have ensued. In this the hussites were certainly defective, though by no means fundamentally so; and hence, while they were pursuing a matter of inferior importance, they failed to promote the spirit of godliness in so great a degree as they had expected. The inward life and vigour of their church corresponded not with the purity of its external system, nor could distressed consciences find among them that comfort and liberty which are so necessary to propagate godliness to any great extent. In one point, however, they proved themselves the genuine followers of Christ; they determined to make use of no carnal weapons for the defence of religion; and no more to suffer the name of hussites to be disgraced by such unchristian methods, as it formerly had been.

They were soon called to the exercise of that passive courage, which they professed. The increase of their congregations in Bohemia and Moravia, was beheld with suspicion both by romish and calixtine priests, and they were accused of an intention to renew the taborite tumults and to seize the government. Those professors of godliness, who have been so far misled by false zeal, or the love of the world, as to take the sword in defence of religion, little know the injury which they do to the cause which they undertake to support. Profane minds are always malicious, and will be ever apt to charge all who profess the same truths with the same seditious spirit, of which they have once seen some instances. The hussites therefore, loaded with the infamy of their predecessors,

had now no remedy. Even George Podiebrad, who was elected king of Bohemia in 1458, and who had hitherto protected them, now consented to persecute the united brethren.

They had hoped for support in Rokyzan, whose ministry had formerly been useful to their souls. With a degree of evangelical light, this man still followed the world, and lived in miserable grandeur, dearly purchased at the expense of a good conscience. The following is an extract of a letter, which the brethren wrote to him while they laboured under the imputations of promoting needless divisions. It will give the reader some idea of their principles and spirit.* "Your sermons have been highly grateful and pleasant to us. You earnestly exhorted us to flee from the horrible errors of antichrist, revealed in these last days. You taught us that the devil introduced the abuses of the sacraments, and that men placed a false hope of salvation in them. You confirmed to us, from the writings of the apostles and from the examples of the primitive church, the true doctrine of those divine institutions. Being distressed in our consciences, and distracted by the variety of opinions, which prevailed in the church, we were induced to follow your advice, which was to attend the ministry of Peter Chelezitius, whose discourses and writings gave us a clearer insight into christian truths, insomuch that when we saw that your life and practice were at variance with your doctrine, we were constrained to entertain doubts concerning your religious character. When we conversed with you on this occasion your answer was to this effect, "I know that your sentiments are true; but if I should patronize your cause, I must incur the same infamy and disgrace which you do." Whence we understood that you would desert us, rather than relinquish the honours of the world. Having now no

* Joachim Camerarius de Ecclesiis in Bohemia et Moravia, p. 61. I have consulted this treatise, and made use of it as my guide in this chapter, in connexion with Crantz's History of the Brethren, published by La Trobe.

refuge but in God, we implored him to make known to us the mystery of his will. As a gracious father, he hath looked upon our afflictions, and hath heard our prayers. Trusting in our God, we have assembled ourselves in the unity of the faith by which we have been justified through Jesus Christ, and of which we were made partakers in conformity to the image of his death, that we might be the heirs of eternal life. Do not imagine, that we have separated ourselves from you on account of certain rites and ceremonies instituted by men; but on account of evil and corrupt doctrine. For if we could, in connexion with you, have preserved the true faith in Jesus Christ our Lord, we never should have made this separation."

Thus does it appear that the hussite brethren were not mere schismatics, but properly reformed protestants, who separated from the church of Rome on account of the essentials of godliness, and because, in that church, they could not preserve the genuine faith of the gospel, and purity of worship. And the constancy, with which they endured persecution, showed, that they had not received the grace of God in vain. For now they were declared unworthy of the common rights of subjects; and, in the depth of winter, were driven out of the cities and villages, with the forfeiture of all their effects. The sick were thrown into the open fields, where many perished with cold and hunger. Various sorts of torture were inflicted on the brethren: numbers were barbarously murdered; and many died in the prisons.

During these melancholy scenes Gregory, the nephew of Rokyzan, was distinguished by his zeal, fortitude, and charity. To these virtues he added prudence and discretion, of which he gave a remarkable instance.* The governor of Prague apprehending danger to the brethren to be at hand, had the kindness

* It is not easy to give a regular account of these transactions according to the order of time. There is, I find, some diversity in this respect, between the two authors whom I follow. But I retain the substance of the narrative, collected from both.

to warn Gregory to withdraw from Prague, which he did accordingly.* Some of the brethren were disgusted at this conduct, and boasted, that the rack was their breakfast, and the flames their dinner. Part, however, of these men failed on the trial, and recanted, to save their lives; though of the lapsed, some bemoaned their fall, and recovered by repentance. Gregory himself, on another occasion, underwent with patience the tortures of the rack. In the extremity of his suffering he fell into a swoon, and was believed to have expired.† His uncle Rokyzan hastened to the prison at the news, and lamented over him in these words, "My dear Gregory, I would to God I were where thou art." So strong was the power of conscience still in this unhappy archbishop! But Gregory recovered, and was preserved by providence to be a nursing father to the church to a very advanced age.

The brethren, hearing of the sensibility discovered by Rokyzan, addressed themselves to him again; but his answers were of the same kind as formerly. He was determined not to suffer persecution; and they, in their farewel letter, said to him, with more zeal than discretion, "thou art of the world, and wilt perish with the world." The persecution now took a different turn; the hussites were no longer tortured, but were driven out of the country; whence they were obliged to hide themselves in mountains and woods, and to live in the wilderness. In this situation in the year 1467 they came to a resolution to form a church among themselves, and to appoint their own ministers. In 1480 they received a great increase of their numbers from the accession of waldensian refugees, who escaped out of Austria, where Stephen, the last bishop of the waldenses in that province, was burnt alive, and where the vehemence of persecution no longer allowed this people to live in security. An union was easily formed between the waldenses and the hussites, on account of the similarity of their sentiments and man-

* Joachim Camer. p. 85. † Camerarius, p. 80.

ners. The refugees, however, found their situation but little meliorated by a junction with a people, who were obliged to conceal themselves in thickets and in clefts of rocks; and who, to escape detection by the smoke, made no fires except in the night, when they read the word of God and prayed. What they must have suffered in these circumstances, may be easily conceived. The death of king Podiebrad, in 1471, had afforded them, indeed, some relief; and about the same time had died also the unhappy Rokyzan, who, in his latter days, promoted the persecutions against them, and who expired in despair.

In 1481 the hussites were banished Moravia; but returned into that country six years afterwards. In the beginning of the sixteenth century, they counted two hundred congregations in Bohemia and Moravia. Their most violent persecutors were the calixtines, who certainly for the most part resembled the papists in all things except in the particularity, from which their name was derived.

And here I close, for the present, the history of the hussites, who doubtless as a body of men feared God and served him in the gospel of his Son. They also maintained a degree of discipline among themselves vastly superior to that of any others of the christian name, unless we except the churches of the waldenses. Both of these however were defective in evangelical LIGHT. There wanted an exhibition of the pure doctrines of Christ, luminous, attractive, and powerful, which should publish peace and salvation to mankind through the cross of Christ, and engage the attention of the serious and thoughtful, who knew not the way of peace. These could find little instruction or consolation in the view of a society of well disciplined christians, whose manners indeed were pure and holy, but in the eyes of the ignorant forbidding and austere. God in his mercy was now hastening this exhibition by the light of the reformation, which, after we have very briefly surveyed the fifteenth century in GENERAL, must engage our attention.

CHAP. IV.

A Brief Review of the Fifteenth Century.

THE most remarkable events, which distinguish this period in general history, appear to have been directed by divine providence with a particular subserviency to the reformation. Only in this view they will deserve the notice of the historian of the church of Christ. In the year 1453 Constantinople was taken by the Turkish emperor Mahomet II. From the year 1299 when the four angels were loosed, which had been bound in the river Euphrates,* that is to say, when four Turkish sultanies were established in the east, the Turks had gradually increased their power, and filled the world with carnage and confusion. In the mean time the princes of Europe, absorbed in the vortex of narrow and contracted politics, indolently beheld these ferocious barbarians advancing further and further to the west, and formed no generous plan of defensive combination. It was in vain that the distressed emperors of the east implored the aid of the western princes. The common enemy OVERFLOWED AND PASSED OVER, to use the prophetic language of Daniel, and having once gained a footing in Europe, he continued to domineer over a large part of christendom, and to desolate the nations. The same unerring spirit of prophecy which foretold these amazing scenes by St. John, foretold also the continued obduracy and impenitence of the nominal christians. They repented not of their idolatry and practical wickedness.†

There cannot be a more melancholy contemplation, than to observe the infatuation of nations, who have provoked God to forsake them. Though the voice of providence is addressed to their senses, they consider

* Rev. ix. 14 † Rev. ix. 21.

not the works of the Lord, and at the same time seem to be as destitute of political sagacity, as they are of religious principle. This fifteenth century affords an awful instance of these things. The Turks oppressed Europe with persevering cruelty; but Europe neither humbled itself before God, nor took any measures to check the ambition of the mahometans. The Sovereign of the universe, however, was bringing order out of confusion, and light out of darkness. The learned men, who emigrated from Greece, revived the study of letters in Europe, and paved the way for that light of classical erudition, which was one of the most powerful of all those subordinate means, which were employed in the demolition of idolatry and superstition. By a surprising concurrence of circumstances, the noble art of printing was invented about the year 1440.* Learning was cultivated with incredible ardour: the family of the Medici was raised up to patronize science; and toward the end of this same century, Erasmus arose, whose good sense, taste and industry, were uncommonly serviceable to the reformation. By his labours, monastic superstition received a wound which has never since been healed; and learned men were furnished with critical skill and ingenuity, of which they failed not to avail themselves in the instruction of mankind to a degree beyond what Erasmus himself had ever conceived.

Thus, under the care of divine providence, materials were collected, for that beautiful edifice, which began to be erected in the next century. In the fifteenth century the great value and benefit of these materials scarcely appeared; the same corruptions both of faith and of practice, which have so often been described, still prevailed in all their horrors.

In the mean time there was some individuals, who, though not connected with any particular christian societies, evidenced the power of godliness. Among these Thomas Rhedon, a Frenchman and a carmelite

* Mosheim, vol. i. p. 764.

friar was distinguished.* This man came to Rome with the Venetian ambassadors, having undertaken this journey in the hope of improving his understanding in religious concerns. He had hitherto no conception of the enormous corruptions of that venal city, and was therefore astonished to find that even the habitation of St. Peter was become a den of thieves. His zealous spirit was stirred up in him, to give an open testimony to evangelical truth; and at length by continual preaching he incurred the hatred of the ruling powers. In fine, he was degraded from the priesthood, and was burnt four years after his arrival at Rome, in the year 1436, during the pontificate of Eugenius, the successor of that same Martin who was raised to the popedom by the council of Constance. Several others, who like him were enlightened, and like him were faithful to their God, though unconnected with any particular church, were executed in Germany, not long after the burning of John Huss.

Jerom Savanarola, an Italian monk, by his zeal, learning, and piety, incurred in an eminent manner the hatred of the court of Rome. Notwithstanding the repeated menaces of the pope, he continued to preach the word of God with great vehemence, and with a degree of light and knowledge, which seems superior to that of most, if not of all men, in that age. In 1496 he upheld the standard of the gospel at Florence, though many warned him of the danger, to which he was exposed by his great boldness. At length, in the year 1498,† he and two other friars, named Dominic and Silvester, were imprisoned. During his confinement, he wrote a spiritual meditation on the thirty-first psalm, in which he described the conflict between the flesh and the spirit, a subject peculiarly evangelical, and which needs some real exercise of practical godliness, in order to be duly understood and relished by mankind. The pope's legates arriving at Florence, Jerom and his two companions were charged with maintain-

* Fox, vol. i. p. 758. † Fox, p. 830

ing various heretical opinions, one of which will deserve to be distinctly mentioned as characteristic of the times in which they lived. For example, they were accused in explicit terms of having preached the doctrine of free justification through faith in Christ; and after they had persevered in what was called an obstinate heresy, they were degraded, delivered to the secular power at Florence, and burnt to death in the year 1499.

There were also some souls who, in secret, served God in the gospel of his Son; and who knew what spirituality in religion meant, though from some particular circumstances they never were exposed to suffer in any considerable degree for righteousness' sake. Among these was the famous Thomas a Kempis, who died in 1471.* Instead of entering into the tedious dispute concerning the author of the well known book of the imitation of Jesus Christ, let us be content with ascribing it to this monk, its reputed author. It would be impertinent in me to enter into any detail of a performance, so familiar to religious readers: and let it suffice to say, that it abounds with the most pious and devotional sentiments, and could not have been written but by one well versed in christian experience, though it partakes of the common defect of monastic writers; that is to say, it does not sufficiently illustrate the doctrine of justification by faith.

Vincent Ferrer, though bred in the midst of darkness, and connected with the worst of ecclesiastical characters, was a shining model of piety.† He was born at Valentia in Spain, became a dominican friar, and what was far better, a zealous preacher of the word of God. A quotation from his book on spiritual life will deserve the attention of students. "Do you desire to study to advantage? Consult God more than books, and ask him humbly to make you understand what you read. Study drains the mind and heart. Go from time to time to be refreshed at the feet of Christ under

* Du Pin. † Butler, vol. iv.

his cross. Some moments of repose there give fresh vigour and new light: interrupt your study by short, but fervent ejaculations. Science is the gift of the Father of lights. Do not consider it as attainable, merely by the work of your own mind or industry." This holy person was retained in the service of Peter de Luna, who, as pope, took the name of Benedict XIII., and was one of those three popes, that were deposed by the council of Constance. Very few men are represented in history to have been of a more proud and deceitful character than Peter de Luna. Vincent intreated his master to resign his dignity. Benedict rather artfully eluded than directly refused the request. Bishoprics and a cardinal's hat were then offered to Vincent; but his heart was insensible to the charms of worldly honours and dignities. He very earnestly wished to become an apostolic missionary; and, in this respect, he was at length gratified by Benedict. At the age of forty-two he began to preach with great fervour in every town from Avignon towards Valentia. His word is said to have been powerful among the Jews, the Mahometans, and others. After he had laboured in Spain, France, and Italy, he then, at the desire of Henry IV. king of England, exerted himself in the same manner throughout the chief towns of England, Scotland, and Ireland. Still finding Peter de Luna entirely obstinate in his ambition, he renounced his service, and, by the desire of king Henry V., made Normandy, and Britanny, the theatre of his labours during the last two years of his life. He died at the age of sixty-two.

How truly humble this man was, appears from the whole of this little account which I can collect concerning him; and particularly, from his own confession; "my whole life is a sink of iniquity: I am all infection: I am corruption throughout. I feel this to be so more and more. Whoever is proud, shall stand without. Christ manifests his truth to the lowly, and hides himself from the proud."

Antoninus, archbishop of Florence, born in the year

1389, seems to have been a similar character.* Great things are related of his pastoral labours and services. His secretary, observing his indefatigable exertions, once said to him, "The life of a bishop is truly pitiable, if he is doomed to live in such a constant hurry as you live." "To enjoy inward peace," replied he, "we must, amidst all our affairs, ever reserve a closet as it were in our hearts, where we are to remain retired within ourselves and where no worldly business can enter." He died aged seventy; and is said to have frequently repeated, in his last moments, words which he had been accustomed to use in the time of his health; namely, "To serve God is to reign."

Let Bernardin† of the republic of Sienna, close this concise review of the fifteenth century. He was born in the year 1380, and on account of his uncommon zeal in preaching, was called "the burning coal." He gave this advice to clergymen, "Seek first the kingdom of God, and the Holyghost will give you a wisdom, which no adversary can withstand." This excellent man expressed an earnest wish to be able to cry out with a trumpet through the world, "How long will ye love simplicity?" He died aged sixty-three years.

* Butler, vol v. † Id.

CENTURY XVI.

CHAP. I.

The Reformation under the conduct of Luther.

PRELIMINARIES.

THE sixteenth century opened with a prospect of all others the most gloomy, in the eyes of every true christian. Corruption both in doctrine and in practice had exceeded all bounds; and the general face of Europe, though the name of Christ was every where professed, presented nothing that was properly evangelical. Great efforts indeed had been made to emancipate the church from the "powers of darkness;" and in consequence many individual souls had been conducted into the path of salvation. Still nothing like a general reformation had taken place in any part of Europe. For it must be confessed, that the labours of Claudius of Turin, of the waldensian barbs, of Wickliff, and of Huss, had not been sufficiently directed against the predominant corruptions in doctrine, though the practical abuses of the popedom had been opposed with ingenuous freedom and disinterested courage. The external branches only, rather than the bitter root itself, which supported all the evils of false religion, being attacked, no permanent or extensive change had ensued. The waldenses were too feeble to molest the popedom; and the hussites, divided among themselves, and worn out by a long series of contentions, were reduced to silence. Among both were found persons of undoubted godliness, but they appeared incapable of making effectual impressions on the kingdom of antichrist. The Roman pontiffs were still the uncontrolled patrons of impiety:

neither the scandalous crimes of Alexander VI. nor the military ferocity of Julius II. (pontiffs whose actions it is impertinent to the plan of this history to detail) seem to have lessened the dominion of the court of Rome, or to have opened the eyes of men so as to induce them to make a sober investigation of the nature of true religion.

But not many years after the commencement of this century, the world beheld an attempt to restore the light of the gospel, more evangelically judicious, more simply founded on the word of God, and more ably and more successfully conducted than any which had ever been seen since the days of Augustin. Martin Luther, whom divine Providence raised up for this purpose, was evidently the instrument rather than the agent of this reformation. He was led from step to step, by a series of circumstances, far beyond his original intentions; and in a manner, which might evince the excellency of the power to be of God and not of man.* Even the reformations, which took place in several other parts of Europe, besides Germany, the scene of Luther's transactions, were in a great measure derived from the light, which he was enabled to diffuse among mankind. And as the peculiar excellency of the revival of godliness now before us lay in this, that it was conversant in fundamentals of doctrine, rather than in correction of mere abuses of practice, hence the history of lutheranism recommends itself in an especial manner to the study of every theologian.

That I may be able to furnish the reader with a clear and satisfactory view of this important part of ecclesiastical history, I shall particularly avail myself of the labours of the learned Seckendorf, who published a Latin translation of Maimbourg's† history, and who, in a diffusive comment, often corrected and refuted it, and at the same time supplied from the

* 2 Cor. iv. 7.

† Louis Maimbourg, a learned Jesuit, wrote celebrated histories of calvinism, lutheranism, arianism, &c. &c.

very best materials whatever might be wanted to illustrate the progress of lutheranism. The authentic documents derived from the archives of the royal house of Saxe Gotha, and the original papers of Luther, Melancthon, and other reformers are largely quoted by this author. He adverts also continually to the opposite accounts of the romish writers. In fine, he seems to have examined all the best sources of information on this subject, and to have placed before his readers, whatever might be needful to inform their judgments. I follow Seckendorf therefore as my principal guide, yet not exclusively; I also make use of father Paul, of Du Pin, of Sleidan, Thuanus, &c. &c. The merely modern writers, who too commonly treat these interesting matters in a superficial manner, content with elegance of style, and an indulgence to the popular taste, afford little service towards the execution of my plan.

In a manuscript history, extending from the year 1524 to 1541, composed by Frederic Myconius, a very able coadjutor of Luther and Melancthon, the author describes the state of religion in the beginning of this century in striking terms. "The passion and satisfaction of Christ, were treated as a bare history, like the Odyssey of Homer: concerning faith, by which the righteousness of the Redeemer and eternal life are apprehended, there was the deepest silence: Christ was described as a severe judge, ready to condemn all who were* destitute of the intercession of saints and of pontifical interest. In the room of Christ, were substituted as saviours and intercessors, the virgin Mary, like a pagan Diana, and other saints, who from time to time had been created by the popes. Nor were men, it seems, entitled to the benefit of their prayers except they deserved it of them by their works. What sort of works was necessary for this end was distinctly explained; not the works prescribed in the decalogue, and enjoined on all mankind, but such as enriched the priests and monks. Those,

* Seckendorf, vol. i. page 4.

who died neglecting these, were consigned to hell, or at least, to purgatory, till they were redeemed from it by a satisfaction made either by themselves or by their proxies. The frequent pronunciation of the Lord's prayer and the salutation of the virgin, and the recitations of the canonical hours, constantly engaged those who undertook to be religious. An incredible mass of ceremonious observances was every where visible; while gross wickedness was practised, under the encouragement of indulgences by which the guilt of the crimes was easily expiated. The preaching of the word was the least part of the episcopal function: rites and processions employed the bishops perpetually, when engaged in religious exercises. The number of clergy was enormous, and their lives were most scandalous. I speak of those whom I have known in the town of Gothen, &c." If we add to this the testimony of Pellicanus, another of Luther's followers, "that a Greek testament could not be procured at any price in all Germany,"* what can be wanting to complete the picture of that darkness in which men lived, and in what did the christian nations differ from pagans, except in the name? It may be proper to mention, that even the university of Paris, the first of all the famous schools of learning, could not furnish a single person capable of supporting a controversy against Luther on the foundation of scripture. And scarcely any christian doctor in the beginning of this century had a critical knowledge of the word of God. The reader may find it useful to be detained a little longer in contemplating the situation of the christian world at the time of Luther's appearance. The observations I have to offer for this purpose shall be arranged under four distinct heads; and they will, I trust, assist us in demonstrating the importance of the reformation, and fully evince that the difference between popery and protestantism is not merely verbal.

1. The popish doctrine of indulgences was then in

* Page 132. Id.

the highest reputation. We shall be in no danger of misrepresenting this doctrine, if we state it according to the ideas of one of the ablest champions of popery.* The church, he tells us, imposes painful works or sufferings on offenders; which, being discharged or undergone with humility, are called satisfactions; and when regarding the fervor of the penitents, or other good works, she remits some part of the task, this is called "an indulgence." For he pretends that the infinite satisfaction of Christ may be applied in two ways, either by entire remission, without the reservation of any punishment, or by the changing of a greater punishment into a less. "The first," he says, "is done in baptism, the second in the case of sins committed after baptism." And here he gives us the authority of the council of Trent, to support his assertion, namely, "the power to grant indulgences has been committed to the church by Jesus Christ, and the use of them is beneficial to salvation." Those, he observes, who depart this life indebted to divine justice for some of the pains reserved, must suffer them in another life in the state of purgatory."

Reliefs are however provided in this case also; the benefit of indulgences extends, it seems, beyond the grave, and the doctrine of commutation for offences, applied in real practice by the friends of the deceased, was held to be valid in heaven. The foundation of all this system was generally believed to be this: there was supposed to be an infinite treasure of merit in Christ and the saints; which was abundantly more than sufficient for themselves; thus, what is strictly true of the divine Saviour, was asserted also of saints, namely, that they had done works of supererogation. This treasure was deposited in the church, under the conduct of the see of Rome, and was sold,—for literally sold it was for money,—at that see's discretion to those who were able and willing to pay for it; and few were found willing to undergo the course of a

* Bossuet, bishop of Meaux, in an exposition of the doctrine of the catholic church in matters of controversy.

severe penance of unpleasant austerities, when they could afford to commute for it by pecuniary payments. The popes, and under them the bishops and the clergy, particularly the dominican and franciscan friars, had the disposition of this treasure; and as the pontiffs had the power of canonizing new saints at their own will, the fund was ever growing; and so long as the system could maintain its credit, the riches of their church, thus secularized under the appearance of religion, became a sea without a shore. No impartial examiner of authentic records will say, that I have overcharged this account of indulgences. In fact, these were the symptoms of the last stage of papal depravity; and as the moral evils, which they encouraged, were plain to every one not totally destitute of discernment, they were the first objects, assaulted by the reformers.

2. But the views of those wise and holy personages were far more extensive. They saw, that a practice so scandalously corrupt, was connected with the grossest ignorance of the nature of gospel grace. The doctrine of justification, in its explicit form, had been lost for many ages to the christian world. If men had really believed, that by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ salvation was obtained, and that God "justifies the ungodly" through faith alone, how could they have been imposed on by the traffic of indulgences? In whatever manner the papist might subtilize and divide, he was compelled by his system to hold, that by a compliance with the rules of the church, either in the way of indulgences, or by some severer mode, pardon was to be obtained; and that the satisfaction of Christ was not sufficiently meritorious for this end; in other words that the gift of God is not eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.* And in fact the preachers of indulgences, whether popes themselves or their ministers, held out to the people with sufficient clearness, that the inheritance of eternal life was to be purchased by indulgences. Proofs of this have already

* See Rom. vi. end.

appeared in the course of this history, and more will be given hereafter. The testimony of Sleidan, one of the most judicious and dispassionate historians, to the nature of indulgences, well deserves to be transcribed in this place. It is contained in the beginning of his excellent history. "Pope Leo X. making use of that power, which his predecessors had usurped over all christian churches, sent abroad into all kingdoms his letters and bulls, with ample promises of the full pardon of sins, and of eternal salvation to such as would purchase the same with money!!!" Even when the traffic of indulgences was checked by the pontiffs, as being carried on in too gross a manner, no clear account was given in what the abuse consisted. In fine, it was evident, that no reformation could take place through the medium of qualifying and correcting abuses of this traffic. The system itself was wholly impious, and the right knowledge of justification was the only remedy adequate to the evil. This, therefore, the reader is to look for, as the most capital object of the reformation: and thus, in the demolition of one of the vilest perversions of superstition, there suddenly arose and revived, in all its infant simplicity, that apostolical doctrine, in which is contained the great mystery of the scriptures.

3. The state of mankind at that time was peculiarly adapted to the reception of so rich a display of gospel grace. God sent a plentiful rain, whereby he did confirm his inheritance, when it was weary.* Men were then bound fast in fetters of iron: their whole religion was one enormous mass of bondage. Terrors beset them on every side; and the fiction of purgatory was ever teeming with ghosts and apparitions. Persons truly serious, and such there ever were and will be, because there ever was and will be a true church on earth, were so clouded in their understandings by the prevailing corruptions of the hierarchy, that they could find no access to God by Jesus Christ. The road of simple faith, grounded on the divine promises,

* Ps. lxviii. 9.

connected always with real humility, and always productive of hearty and grateful obedience, was stopped up with briars and thorns. No certain rest could be afforded to the weary mind, and a state of doubt, of allowed doubt and anxiety, was recommended by the papal system. What a joyful doctrine then was that of the real gospel of remission of sins through Christ alone received by faith! a doctrine, which is indeed to be found every where in the scriptures; but these were almost unknown among the people at the beginning of the reformation.

4. Should the philosophical sceptic, or the pharisaical formalist express his surprise, that I should lay so great a stress on the christian article of justification, and wonder that any person should ever be at a loss to discover the way of obtaining true peace of conscience, it may be useful towards satisfying his scruples, to remind such a character of a FOURTH mark of corruption, which much prevailed in the times previous to the reformation. This is, the predominance of the aristotelian philosophy in Europe at that period; a philosophy, which knew nothing of original sin and native depravity, which allowed nothing to be criminal but certain external flagitious actions, and which was unacquainted with the idea of any righteousness of grace, imputed to a sinner. How many in this age, who neither know nor value Aristotle, do yet altogether follow his selfrighteous notions of religion! These are congenial to our fallen nature, and are incapable, while they prevail in the mind, of administering any cure to papal bondage, except that which is worse than the disease itself. They tend to lead men into the depths of atheistic profaneness. But the person, whom God raised up particularly at this time to instruct an ignorant world, was most remarkably eminent for selfknowledge. Only characters of this sort are qualified to inform mankind in subjects of the last importance towards the attainment of their eternal happiness. Luther knew himself; and he knew also the scriptural grounds on

which he stood in his controversies with the ecclesiastical rulers. His zeal was disinterested, his courage undaunted. Accordingly, when he had once erected the standard of truth, he continued to uphold it with an unconquerable intrepidity, which merits the gratitude and esteem of all succeeding ages.

CHAP. II.

The beginning of the Controversy concerning Indulgences.

POPE Alexander VII. the most flagitious of men, died in the year 1503. After the short interval of the dominion of Pius III. who ruled the church less than a year, Julius II. was elected pontiff. A circumstance attended this election, which deserves to be recorded* as a memorable indication of those times. The cardinals agreed upon oath before the election, and obliged the new pontiff after his election to take the same oath, that a general council should be called within two years to reform the church. The effect of this measure, which so strongly implied the consent of the christian world to the necessity of a reformation, was the council of Pisa. But nothing good was to be expected from Julius; a man, in the language of worldly greatness, renowned for military ambition. By his intrigues the council of Pisa was dissolved, and Julius died in 1513, after he had filled the christian world with blood and confusion by his violence and rapacity.

Leo X.† succeeded; a man famous for the encouragement of letters and the fine arts, and deservedly

* Seckendorf, vol. i. page 3.

† This prelate, the son of Lorenzo the magnificent, was ordained at the age of seven years, made an abbot before he was eight years old, and at the age of thirteen became a cardinal! Such was the influence of his father in the court of Rome! Lorenzo, in a prudential letter to his son, tells him, that he had heard with pleasure of his attention to communion

celebrated among the patrons of learned men. But historical veracity can scarcely admit any further encomium on his character. He was a Florentine of the illustrious house of the Medici, and inherited the elegant taste and munificent spirit of that family. He was elected pope in the thirty seventh year of his age. Though refined and humanized by his love of the liberal arts, and extremely abhorrent from the savage manners of Alexander and of Julius, he possessed other qualities, no less inconsistent than theirs with the character of a pastor of the church of Christ. An excessive magnificence, a voluptuous indolence, and above all, a total want of religious principle, rendered him perhaps more strikingly void of every sacerdotal qualification than any pontiffs before him. He has been accused of open infidelity; but the proofs are said to be only negative; certainly, however, he at no time took the least pains to discover to mankind, that he had a sincere reverence for religion. It was during the pontificate of this man, that providence gave the severest blow to the authority of the Roman hierarchy, which it had ever received since the days of Gregory II.

Both before his exaltation and after it, he opposed with dexterity and success the laudable attempts after a reformation, which have been mentioned. A council called by this pope, and held in the lateran palace, was directed under his auspices against the determinations of the council of Pisa. Afterwards in the year 1517, the university of Paris, renowned at that time through Europe for learning and knowledge, appealed from its decisions to a future general council. It is not necessary to enter into the detail of these transactions. They are here briefly mentioned in a general way for the purpose of showing that common sense and the voice of natural conscience had agreed to the

and confession; and that there was no better way for him to obtain the favour of heaven, than by habituating himself to the performance of such duties.—Roscoe's Life of Lorenzo de Medici.

Lorenzo appears to have known the art of rising in this world, better than the narrow road to eternal life.

necessity of a reformation, though men knew not the principles on which it ought to proceed. The greatest personages of the times had delivered their sentiments to the same. The existence of the distemper was admitted. The true remedy was unknown: that was to be drawn only from the word of God; and almost all parties were equally ignorant of the contents of the sacred volumes. In this same year, however, 1517, the spirit of Luther was raised up, to instruct the ignorant, to rouse the negligent, and to oppose the scandalous practices of interested and ambitious ecclesiastical rulers.

No reformer had ever an opportunity more favourable to his designs. Such was the temerity of the existing hierarchy, that they might seem even to have purposely afforded to their opponents an advantage for the beginning of a contest, or rather to have been providentially infatuated. Leo X. after he had presided almost five years, having reduced himself to straits by his prodigal expenses of various kinds, and being desirous to complete the erection of St. Peter's church, begun at Rome by his predecessor Julius II. after his example had recourse to the sale of indulgences, the general nature of which Maimbourg describes much in the same manner as has been done in the foregoing chapter.* These he published throughout the christian world, granting freely to all, who would pay money for the building of St. Peter's Church, the license of eating eggs and cheese in the time of lent. This is one of the many ridiculous circumstances which attended Leo's indulgences, and it is gravely related by the papal historians. The promulgation of these indulgences in Germany, was committed to a prelate, the brother of the elector of Brandenburg. His name was Albert, a man who at that

* Seckend. page 8. Let the reader remember, that this incomparable author, S. gives us all along the very words of his antagonist, whence the papal as well as the protestant materials are continually held up to view.

Even Du Pin allows, that Leo was naturally proud and lofty; and he confesses, that the erection of St. Peter's Church was the occasion of that pope's having recourse to the sale of indulgences. Book ii. chap. 1.

very time held two archbishoprics, namely, those of Mentz and of Magdeburg, and who himself received immense profits from the sale. Albert delegated the office of John Tetzel, a dominican inquisitor, well qualified for an employment of this kind. He was a bold and enterprising monk of uncommon impudence, and had already distinguished himself in a similar transaction. He had proclaimed indulgences in support of the war against the Muscovites, and by that means had much enriched the Teutonic knights, who had undertaken that war. "This frontless monk," says a celebrated ecclesiastical historian,* "executed this iniquitous commission not only with matchless insolence, indecency, and fraud, but even carried his impiety so far as to derogate from the all sufficient power and influence of the merits of Christ." Myconius assures us, that he himself heard Tetzel declaim with incredible effrontery concerning the unlimited power of the pope and the efficacy of indulgences. The people believed, that the moment any person had paid the money for the indulgence, he became certain of his salvation, and that the souls, for whom the indulgences were bought, were instantly released out of purgatory. So Maimbourg allows; and if the people really believed the current doctrine of the times, and looked on the preachers of indulgences as men worthy of credit, they must have believed so. We have formerly seen popes themselves to hold this confident language. John Tetzel boasted, that he had saved more souls from hell by his indulgences, than St. Peter had converted to christianity by his preaching. He assured the purchasers of them, that their crimes, however enormous, would be forgiven; whence it became almost needless for him to bid them dismiss all fears concerning their salvation. For remission of sins being fully obtained, what doubt could there be of salvation? In the usual form of absolution, written by his own hand, he said, "I, by the authority of Jesus Christ, through the merits of his most holy passion,

* Mosheim.

and by the authority of his blessed apostles, Peter and Paul, and of our most holy pope, delegated to me as commissioner, do absolve thee: first, from all ecclesiastical censures however incurred; secondly, from all sins committed by thee, however enormous; for so far the keys of the sacred church extend: and, I do this by remitting to thee all the punishments due to thee in purgatory on account of thy crimes, and I restore thee to the innocence and purity in which thou wast when baptized, so that the gates of punishment* may be shut to thee when dying, and the gates of paradise be opened." Such was the style in which these formulas were written. It is impertinent to blame the abuses committed by the officials; it is not to be supposed, that these formulas were without papal authority; neither has any thing of that kind ever been asserted. In regard to the effect of indulgences in delivering persons from the supposed torments of purgatory, the gross declarations of Tetzel in public are well known. "The moment the money tinkles in the chest, your father's soul mounts up out of purgatory." It does not appear, that the rulers of the hierarchy ever found the least fault with Tetzel as exceeding his commission, till an opposition was openly made to the practice of indulgences. Whence it is evident, that the protestants have not unjustly censured the corruptions of the court of Rome in this respect. Leo is declared to have granted, immediately and without hesitation,† the profits of the indulgences collected in Saxony and the neighbouring countries as far as the Baltic, to his sister the wife of prince Cibus, by way of gratitude for personal favours which he had received from the family of the Cibi. The indulgences were farmed to the best bidders, and the undertakers employed such deputies to carry on the traffic, as they thought most likely to promote their lucrative views. The inferior officers concerned in this commerce were daily seen‡ in public houses, enjoying themselves in riot and voluptuousness: in fine,

* Seckend. page 14. † Maimbourg, page 11. ‡ Id. page 12

whatever the greatest enemy of popery could have wished, was at that time exhibited with the most undisguised impudence and temerity, as if on purpose to render that wicked ecclesiastical system infamous before all mankind.

Indulgences were granted also at this time on many PARTICULAR occasions. The consecrated host had been lost at the parish church at Schiniedeberg in the diocese of Misnia: in consequence of which, the pastor had excommunicated the deacon and the porter of the church. These men, whom the superstition of the times had made culprits, had however recourse to the generosity of Tetzel, who was in the neighbourhood, and who furnished them with a diploma of absolution.* The prices of these indulgences were accommodated to the various circumstances of petitioners; and thus a plan was formed and was successfully carrying into execution, which would infallibly lay all orders of men under contribution. The prodigious sale of indulgences evinces both the profound ignorance of the age, and also the power of superstitious fears, with which the consciences of men were then distressed. This however was the very situation of things, which opened the way for the reception of the gospel. But who was to proclaim the gospel in its native beauty and simplicity? To give a satisfactory answer to this question was no easy matter. The princes, the bishops, and the learned men of the times, saw all this scandalous traffic respecting the pardon of sins, but none was found who possessed the knowledge, the courage, and the honesty, necessary to detect the fraud, and to lay open to mankind the true doctrine of salvation by the remission of sins through Jesus Christ. But at length an obscure pastor appeared, who alone and without help, began to erect the standard of sound religion. No man who believes that "the preparation of the heart is from the Lord," will doubt whether Martin Luther, in this great undertaking, was moved by the spirit of God.

* Seckendorf, page 15.

This extraordinary person, at that time an augustin monk, was professor or lecturer of the university of Wittemberg in Saxony. That academy was at once a college of students and a society of monks. Frederic the wise, elector of Saxony, ardently desirous of promoting literary knowledge, had added the former character to the latter, and always showed a steady regard to Luther, on account of his skill and industry in advancing the reputation of that infant seminary of knowledge, which then was very low and abject both in its revenues and its exterior appearance. Luther preached also from time to time, and heard confessions.* In the memorable year 1517, it happened, that certain persons, repeating their confessions before him, and owning themselves to be atrocious offenders, yet refused to comply with the penances which he enjoined them, because they said they were possessed of diplomas of indulgences. Luther was struck with the evident absurdity of such conduct, and ventured to refuse them absolution. The persons thus rejected, complained loudly to Tetzel, who was preaching in a town at no great distance. The dominican inquisitor had not been accustomed to contradiction. He stormed, and frowned, and menaced every one, who dared to oppose him; and sometimes he ordered a pile of wood to be constructed and set on fire for the purpose of striking terror into the minds of heretics. Luther was at that time only thirty four years old, vigorous both in mind and body, fresh from the schools, and fervent in the scriptures. He saw crowds flock to Wittemberg and the neighbouring towns to purchase indulgences, and having no clear idea of the nature of that traffic, yet sensible of the obvious evils with which it must be attended, he began to signify, in a gentle manner, from the pulpit, that the people might be better employed than in running from place to place to procure INDULGENCES. So cautiously did this great man begin a work, the consequence of which he then so little foresaw. He

* Seckendorf, page 17.

did not so much as know at that time, who were the receivers of the money. In proof of this, we find he wrote to Albert, archbishop of Mentz, who, he understood, had appointed Tetzel to this employment, but with whose personal* concern in the gains he was then unacquainted, intreating him to withdraw the licence of Tetzel, and expressing his fears of the evils which would attend the sale of indulgences. He sent him likewise certain theses which he had drawn up in the form of queries concerning this subject. He expressed himself with the greatest caution and modesty. In fact, he saw enough to alarm a tender conscience, but he knew not well where to fix the blame. He was not, as yet, fully satisfied in his own mind either as to the extent of the growing mischief, or the precise nature of its cause. In this state of doubt and anxiety, he wrote also to other bishops, and particularly to his own diocesan the bishop of Brandenburg,† with whom he was a particular favourite.

Nothing can be more orderly, candid, and open, than this conduct of our reformer.‡ Zeal and charity were here united with the most perfect regard to ecclesiastical discipline. The bishop of Brandenburg reverenced the integrity of Luther, while he was aware of the dangerous ground on which he was advancing. "You will oppose the church," he replied, "you cannot think in what troubles you will involve yourself; you had much better be still and quiet." This was not a language calculated to repress the firm and intrepid spirit of the Saxon monk; for, though by no means as yet a competent master of the points in debate, he saw they were of too great mag-

* See page 268, of this vol. † Id. page 16.

‡ Du Pin, in conjunction with all the Roman catholic writers, asserts that Luther's zeal for the interest of his own order, led him to oppose the doctrine of indulgences. The best refutation of this calumny is to be derived from a fair statement of facts. It has been said likewise, that Staupitius, the vicar general of Luther's order of monks, and that the elector of Saxony, stimulated Luther to commence his opposition. But there is no where to be found the smallest proof of these assertions. The love of truth itself appears from his whole conduct to have influenced his measures, and the story needs only to be fairly told, in order to convince any candid person, that this was the case.

nitude for a conscientious pastor to pass them by unnoticed: he knew too the manners of lower life, and could judge, far better than the bishops in general could do, of the mischievous consequences, which were to be apprehended. With deliberate steadiness he ventured therefore to persevere; and having tried in vain to procure the concurrence of the dignitaries of the church, he published his theses, ninety five in number; and in fifteen days they were spread throughout Germany. Their effect on the minds of men was rapid and powerful, though Tetzel by threats, had silenced some pastors who had faintly opposed him, and though bishops and doctors, through fear of the flames, remained perfectly silent.

"Thus," says Luther, (for much of the foregoing account is taken from his own words) "I was commended as an excellent doctor, who, alone had the spirit to attempt so great an undertaking; but the fame, which I had acquired was by no means agreeable to my mind; because I had then some doubts concerning the nature of indulgences, and because I feared that the task was beyond my powers and capacity."*

But the real motives of Luther will be discovered in the surest manner by a brief review of the manners and spirit of the man, previous to his open declarations respecting indulgences. This Saxon reformer was born in the year 1483 at Isleben, a town belonging to the county of Mansfield. His father wrought in the mines of Mansfield which were at that time very famous; and, after the birth of his son Martin Luther, removed to that town, became a proprietor in the mines, discharged public offices there, and was esteemed by all men for his integrity. He gave a very liberal education to Martin, who was remarkable for dutiful affection to his parents in general, though in one instance, to be mentioned presently, he was led away by the superstition of the times, so as to offend his father exceedingly. After he had made great pro-

* Id. page 16.

ficiency in his studies at Magdeburg, Eisenach, and Erfurth, he commenced master of arts in the university of Erfurth, at the age of twenty; and having now finished his course of philosophy, he began to give close attention to the science of the civil law, and is said to have intended to advance himself by pleading at the bar; but he was diverted from this purpose by an accident.* As he was walking in the fields with one of his most intimate friends, his companion was suddenly killed by lightning; and Luther himself was so terrified, partly by this event, and partly by the horrid noise of the thunder, that while his mind was in the utmost consternation, he formed the hasty resolution of withdrawing from the world, and of throwing himself into the monastery at Erfurth. His father, a man of plain, but of sound understanding, strongly remonstrated. The son as strongly pleaded, what he considered as a terrible call from heaven, to take upon himself the monastic vow. "Take care," replied the father, "that you are not ensnared by a delusion of the devil." But the mind of Martin was determined; and filial disobedience, in such a case, was looked on as a virtue. To the great grief and mortification of his father, he entered the monastery in the year 1505.

In one of his letters, he owns that, from the very beginning of his monastic life, he was constantly sad and dejected;† and being unable to give peace to his mind, he at length opened his griefs to John Staupitius, vicar general of the augustin monks in Germany, a man highly esteemed by Frederic the wise, and consulted by him particularly in things which concerned the university of Wittemberg. Staupitius himself appears to have had some serious views of religion, and a degree of knowledge at that time very uncommon. After Luther had explained to him the uneasy thoughts with which he was burdened, "You

* Du Pin. Moreri. Maimbourg.
Some authors say, that Luther's intimate friend was found murdered about the same time that he himself was so terrified by the thunder.
† Seckendorf, page 19.

do not know, said he, how useful and necessary this trial may be to you; God does not thus exercise you for nothing; you will one day see that he will employ you as his servant for great purposes." The event gave ample honour to the sagacity of Staupitius, and it is very evident, that a deep and solid conviction of sin, leading the mind to the search of scripture truth, and the investigation of the way of peace, was the main spring of Luther's whole afterconduct; and indeed this view of our reformer's state of mind furnishes the only key to the discovery of the real motives, by which he was influenced in his public transactions. Rash and prejudiced writers of the popish persuasion choose to represent him as having been under the dominion of avarice or ambition, but till they can produce some proofs beyond their own suspicions or bare affirmations, all such slanderous accusation must fall to the ground. In truth, no man was ever more free from avarice and ambition: the fear of God predominated to a very high degree in Luther's mind; and a nice sensibility of conscience, attended with an uncommon insight into the depth of our natural depravity, allowed him no rest. As yet he understood not the scriptures; nor felt that peace of God which passeth understanding. He had too much light to sit down in slothful content and indiference, and too little to discern the rich treasures of the gospel, and apply its healing promises to deep conviction of sin and misery. He remained for above a year not only in constant anxiety and suspense, but in perpetual dread and alarm. All these things are abundantly evident, and beyond all contradiction, to those who are acquainted with his writings.

In the second year after Luther had entered into the monastery, he accidentally met with a Latin bible in the library. It proved to him a treasure. Then he first discovered, that there were MORE scripture passages extant than those, which were read to the people. For the scriptures were at that time very little known in the world. In reading the word of God with

prayer, his understanding was gradually enlightened, and he found some beams of evangelical comfort to dart into his soul. The same year he was refreshed in his sickness by the discourse of an old monk, who showed him that remission of sins was to be apprehended by faith alone, and referred him to a passage in Bernard's sermon on the annunciation, where the same doctrine was taught. With incredible ardor he now gave himself up to the study of the scriptures and the books of Augustin. He was at length regarded as the most ingenious and learned man of his order in Germany. But the soul of Luther was constantly panting for something very different from secular glory.

He was ordained in the year 1507, and in the next year was called to the professorship at Wittemberg by Staupitius, where a theatre was opened for the display of his talents both as a teacher of philosophy and as a popular preacher. He excelled in both capacities. Eloquent by nature, and powerful in moving the affections, acquainted also in a very uncommon manner with the elegancies and energy of his native tongue, he became the wonder of his age. These things are allowed very liberally by his enemies;* but it ought to be observed, that the exercises of his own mind, by which, under the guidance of the holy Spirit, he was led more and more into christian truth, would naturally add a strength to his oratory, unattainable by those who speak not from the heart. Martin Polichius, a doctor of law and medicine, exclaimed, "this monk will confound all the doctors, will exhibit new doctrine, and reform the whole Roman church; for he is intent on reading the writings of the prophets and apostles, and he depends on the word of Jesus Christ; this, neither the philosophers nor the sophists can subvert." He, who spake thus, was himself looked on as a prodigy of wisdom; and, I suppose, a degree of discernment, less than his, might have shown an attentive observer, that the didactic plan of Luther was that of an original thinker, who was not likely to con-

* Page, 18. Maimbourg. Page, 22. Varillasius

fine himself to the beaten track, but to produce something new to mankind. Melancthon's concise account entirely agrees with this statement. "Polichius," says he, "often declared, that there was a strength of intellect in this man, which he plainly foresaw would produce a revolution in the popular and scholastic religion of the times." Nor does it seem at all improbable, but that if Luther had followed merely the dictates of his own adventurous genius, he might have been the inventor of some novel theological schemes and doctrines. But all tendency to fanciful excursions in the important concerns of religion, was effectually restrained and chastised in the mind of our reformer by his profound reverence for the written word: moreover, from his first entrance into the monastery, he appears to have been taught of God, and to have been led more and more into such discoveries of native depravity, as render a man low in his own eyes, and dispose him to receive the genuine gospel of Christ.

In the year 1510, he was sent to Rome on some business, which related to his own monastery, and this he discharged with so much ability and success, that on his return, he was compelled by the vicar general to assume the degree of doctor of divinity. He writes, that he did this with great reluctance, and entirely from obedience to his superiors. It is easy indeed for a man to say this; but, from the mouth of Luther it is with me decisive of its truth. For veracity and integrity do evidently appear to have remarkably entered into the character of this reformer, as indeed these virtues are always to be eminently found in those, who have had the most genuine experience of christianity. The expenses attending this high degree were defrayed by the elector of Saxony, who always admired Luther, and was perfectly convinced of the profundity of his learning and the rectitude of his views in religion. While he had been at Rome, he had discovered something of the singularity of his character, which had attracted the attention of the Italian priests. The external rites of religion, which to them were

matter of political formality, with him were serious exercises. While they hurried over their exercises of the mass, he performed his with a solemnity and devotion, which excited their ridicule, and they bade him to repeat them with more rapidity. A thoughtful mind like his, could not conceive that religious employments should be discharged with levity, and he returned to his monastery more fully convinced than ever, that Rome was not the scene, in which a serious pastor could properly learn the rudiments of religion. He studied and taught the scriptures with increasing ardour and alacrity, and after he had been created doctor, in the year 1512, he expounded the psalms and the epistles to the Romans, to the great satisfaction of his audience. He studied the Hebrew and the Greek languages, and highly valued the philological labours of the famous Erasmus of Rotterdam, the renowned reviver of classical literature; and while he concurred with that great man in his contempt of monastic trifles, he was intensely studious to learn better and more scriptural notions of God and his attributes, than those which Erasmus so ingeniously satirized. To build was, however, found much more arduous, as it is certainly a far more important work, than to pull down; and from the time that Luther was created a doctor of divinity, he conscientiously devoted his time and talents to the sacred office. Already he was suspected of heresy, because of his dislike of the scholastic doctrines; and he was induced, both from the natural soundness of his understanding, and from the spiritual exercises of his own heart, to reject the aristotelian corruptions of theology, and to study the genuine doctrines of scripture.

In 1516, he thus wrote to a friend.* "I desire to know what your soul is doing; whether wearied at length of its own righteousness, it learns to refresh itself and to rest in the righteousness of Christ. The temptation of presumption in our age is strong in

* Seckend. p. 20.

many, and specially in those who labour to be just and good with all their might, and at the same time are ignorant of the righteousness of God, which in Christ is conferred upon us with a rich exuberance of gratuitous liberality. They seek in themselves to work that which is good, in order that they may have a confidence of standing before God, adorned with virtues and merits, which is an impossible attempt. You, my friend, used to be of this same opinion, or rather, this same mistake; so was I; but now I am fighting against the error, but have not yet prevailed."

This interesting and instructive letter demonstrates what was the religious frame of our monk at that time. He had received the grace of Christ, and knew the true and only way of salvation; though, in his own eyes at least, he was weak in the faith. He both felt and preached the fundamentals of the gospel, before he appeared in the field against popery, and if he had not been absolutely persecuted into a secession, such was his modesty and love of peace and order, and so little had he then studied the particular corruptions of the hierarchy, that he would, in all probability, have continued to his death an obedient son of the Roman church. Many excellent men had done so before him; because, through inadvertency, they had remained unconscious of the absurdities of the predominant religion. The methods of providence were however admirable in conducting Luther into the depths of a controversy, to which he seems to have had no inclination. Indulgences were preached, and he saw the evil of them in a practical, rather than a theoretical light, and was thence drawn undesignedly into a contest, the effects of which were salutary to so many nations. Those who apprehend, that when he began the contest, he was ignorant of the nature of the gospel, appear not to have known the order and method, by which the mind of the Saxon reformer was conducted into religious truth.

In the same year he was appointed. by Staupitius, subaltern vicar; by which office he was authorised to

visit about forty monasteries in Misnia and Thuringia. Returning to Wittemberg in June, he wrote to Spalatinus, who was the secretary of the elector, and always showed himself a steady friend of Luther, in terms which expressed the frank effusions of his own heart, on a review of the state of religion in the country, which the visitation had given him an opportunity of accurately observing. "Many things please your prince, and look great in his eyes, which are displeasing to God. In secular wisdom I confess that he is of all men most knowing; but, in things pertaining to God and which relate to the salvation of souls, I must own that he is blind seven fold." This was the true character of Frederic at that time, though justly esteemed the wisest prince of the age; and though he was sincerely and ingenuously desirous of promoting religion and virtue. In fact, his good understanding was oppressed with a heavy load of the most pitiable superstitions. He was, however, by no means displeased with Luther, for using freedom of speech, and there is reason to believe that, afterwards, he learnt more of the true nature of the gospel, though by very slow degrees.

In October of the same year, Luther communicated to his learned friend Spalatinus, his thoughts concerning certain of the fathers, and also concerning Erasmus's method of interpreting scripture.* This memorable epistle will deserve the particular attention of the reader, as it furnishes judicious and connected observations on Augustin and his contemporaries, and on the fathers both who preceded and who followed them; and as it likewise suggests very useful reflections on the comparative merits of theologians in different periods, from the days of Cyprian to those of Luther and Erasmus.

Luther, to Georg. Spalatinus——

"That, which strikes my mind in considering Erasmus, is this: In interpreting the apostle's account

* Lib. i. ep. 20.

of the righteousness of works, or, of the law, he understands by these terms ceremonial observances ONLY. In the next place, though he admits the doctrine of original sin, he will not allow, that the apostle speaks of it in the fifth chapter to the Romans. Now, if he had carefully read Augustin's Pelagian Tracts, especially his account of the spirit and the letter, of the guilt of sin and the remission of it; and had observed how he speaks in perfect unison with the best of the fathers, from Cyprian to Ambrose, he might have better understood the apostle Paul, and also have conceived more highly of Augustin as an expositor, than he has hitherto done. In dissenting from Erasmus's judgment in this point, I must frankly declare, that I as much prefer Augustin's expositions to those of Jerom as he prefers those of Jerom to Augustin's. I am, it is true, an augustin monk; but that circumstance has no influence on my judgment; for till I had read this father's works, I had not the least prejudice in his favour. But I see that Jerom studiously endeavours to draw every thing to a merely historical meaning,* and what is very extraordinary, where he expounds the scriptures as it were occasionally or accidentally, as in his epistles for instance, he does it in a much sounder manner than when he interprets professedly and on purpose. The righteousness of the law is by no means confined to ceremonies; for, though it includes these, it still more directly respects an obedience to the whole decalogue, which obedience, when it takes place to a certain degree and yet has not Christ for its foundation, though it may produce such men as your Fabricius's, and your Regulus's, that is, very upright moralists according to man's judgment, has nothing in it of the nature of genuine righteousness. For men are not made truly righteous, as Aristotle supposes, by performing certain actions which are

* A merely historical meaning. A mere narration of facts, as opposed to a spiritual meaning, and a practical application to every man's conscience.

externally good, (for they may still be counterfeit characters,) but, men must have righteous principles in the first place, and then they will not fail to perform righteous actions. God first respects Abel, and then his offering.* I beg you would put Erasmus in mind of these things. In so doing, you will discharge the duties both of a friend and of a christian. As on the one hand, I hope and wish that he may be celebrated through the christian world, so on the other, I fear many may be induced by the authority of his name, to patronise that literal and lifeless mode of interpreting scripture, into which almost all commentators have fallen, since the time of Augustin. I may be thought presumptuous and perhaps severe in thus criticising many great men: my apology is, that I feel a concern for the cause of true theology, and for the salvation of the brethren."

A little before the controversy concerning indulgences, George, duke of Saxony, intreated Staupitius to send him some learned and worthy preacher. The vicar general in compliance with his request, despatched Luther with strong recommendations to Dresden. George gave him an order to preach: the sum of Luther's sermon was this:† That no man ought to despair of the possibility of salvation; that those, who heard the word of God with attentive minds, were true disciples of Christ, and were elected, and predestinated to eternal life. He enlarged on the subject, and showed that the whole doctrine of predestination, if the foundation be laid in Christ, was of singular efficacy to dispel that fear, by which men, trembling under the sense of their own unworthiness, are tempted to fly from God, who ought to be our sovereign refuge. An honourable matron, who attended the palace, and who had heard Luther, was asked by George the duke, at dinner, how she liked the discourse. I should die in peace, said she, if I could hear such another sermon. The duke, in much anger, replied, "I

* Gen. iv. † Seck. p. 23.

would give a large sum of money, that a sermon of this sort, which encourages men in a licentious course of life, had never been preached." And he repeated this several times. Within the space of a month, the lady was confined in bed by sickness, and soon after died rejoicing in her prospects of future glory. Fabricius concludes the account with saying,* "From that time Luther came no more to Dresden." That capital of modern Saxony was then part of the dukedom of George, who proved one of the most virulent enemies of lutheranism. He was the uncle of prince Frederic the wise. Like pharisaic formalists in all ages, he perversely misconstrued the doctrine of free salvation by Jesus Christ, which Luther preached, and which is intended to enable humble and repenting souls to serve God with lively faith and cheerful hope. The duke of Saxony, I observe, perversely misconstrued this doctrine, as though it had a tendency to persuade men to live in sin; but the good matron abovementioned, who resided at his court, appears to have tasted of that bitterness of true conviction of sin, which only can render the doctrine of grace delightful and salutary to the mind.

How precious this doctrine must have been to the mind of Luther himself, may be conceived from a well authenticated circumstance,† which evinces the state of mental bondage, in which he had been held. Having for many days neglected, through the intenseness of his studies, to recite the canonical hours, he, in compliance with the pope's decrees, and to satisfy his conscience, actually shut himself up in his closet, and recited what he had omitted, with punctilious exactness and with such severe attention and abstinence, as reduced his strength exceedingly, brought on nearly a total want of sleep for the space of five weeks, and almost produced symptoms of a weakened intellect. Is it to be wondered at, that he, who at length found relief and liberty by the grace of Christ, should be zeal-

* Orig. Sax. lib. vii. † Vol. i. p. 344. Bavar. Seck. p. 21.

ous to preach the mystery of the cross to his fellow creatures?

I have now laid before the curious reader some interesting particulars of the private life of Luther, previous to his assumption of that public character, which has made his name immortal. The serious christian will adore the wisdom and goodness of divine providence, which, by preparatory exercises of soul, had directed this extraordinary personage into the true light and liberty of the gospel of Christ, and fitted him for the great work to which he was called. At the same time it seems a certain fact, that the Saxon reformer was not induced to act the part, which has given so great a celebrity to his name, from motives of personal malice, or of ambition, or of avarice, but purely from the fear of God, from a conscientious regard to evangelical truth, from a zeal for the divine glory, and for the profit of the souls of his fellow creatures.

There are two points concerning Luther, on which all the most respectable, even of the papal party, unanimously concur in their testimony. The one is, that his learning, genius and capacity were of the first magnitude. It may seem proper to mention this, because some modern writers, who appear almost wholly ignorant of the real character of the man, have rashly represented him as a person of contemptible knowledge. But this is the common method of treating many great men, whose studies and attainments have happened to be but little connected with the pursuits and discoveries of the eighteenth century; and till readers learn the practice of so much candor, as may dispose them to make equitable allowances for the taste of the times in which men of great abilities and great accomplishments have made their appearance, such superficial authors will always find admirers. The other particular, relative to our illustrious reformer, is this; that his life is allowed to be without blemish. In fact, the romanists, for the purpose of indulging the spirit of censure, are obliged to have recourse to surmises, for want of realities. When we are much out of humor with a per-

son, it is human nature to ascribe his very best actions to bad motives. But the slanderous representations of enemies ought never to be substituted in the place of authentic documents. The writers alluded to may FANCY, that Luther's conduct is best accounted for on the supposition, that pride, vanity, ambition and resentment, were the ruling passions of the man they dislike; nevertheless, all readers of cool judgment will take care to distinguish between their prejudiced, illnatured, conjectures, and substantial proofs.

Far be it, however, from the historian's design to insinuate, that there were no faults or defects in the character which he so much admires. Besides the incessant ebullitions of native depravity, in the confession of which no man was ever more earnest than Luther, all real christians, the most eminent saints not excepted, have their infirmities, and their faults, which cost them much inward pain and sorrow; yet, it should ever be remembered, that in judging of true followers of Christ, by whatever name we may choose to call either their defective attainments or their positive blemishes, no fault, no imperfection, no falling short of the "perfect man in Christ Jesus," can be allowed, but what is absolutely consistent with sincerity of heart. The very candid and accurate memorialist Seckendorf, who is so useful to my researches, defies all the adversaries of Luther to fix any just censure on his character, except what may be ranked under two heads, namely, a disposition to anger, and an indulgence in jesting. Beyond all doubt the Saxon reformer was of a choleric temper, and he too often gave way to this constitutional evil, as he himself bitterly laments. Neither is it to be denied that he also too much encouraged his natural propensity to facetiousness. The monks of his time were, in general, guilty of the like fault, and often to so great a degree, as very improperly to mix scurrilities with sacred subjects. Moreover, the vices and the follies of those, whom Luther opposed, afforded a strong temptation both to a spirit of anger and of ridicule. For, however severe he may

be thought in many of his invectives, we are compelled by unquestionable evidence to confess, that his keenest satirical pieces never reached the demerits of those who ruled the church in that age. But, after all that can be said in mitigation, it must be owned, that a reformer ought to have considered not so much what they deserved, as what became the character he had to support; namely, that of a serious christian, zealous for the honour of his God, displeased with the vices of his clerical brethren, and grieved on account of the pitiable ignorance of the people, yet more desirous of curing the prevailing evils, than of exposing them.

These unhappy blemishes in Luther, doubtless appear much more offensive to us, than they did in his own time among men of ruder manners, and accustomed to a greater freedom both of action and of expression in their mutual intercourse. They form the darkest shades in his writings, which, in all other respects, are truly admirable. One cannot but feel both some surprise and regret, that this great and good man should have failed, in so considerable a degree, to imitate his favourite author. An uniform spirit of meekness is the singular excellence, which adorns the page of Augustin.

The defects, which we have mentioned, were too considerable to be passed over in silence; and, having now discharged the duty of an impartial historian, we leave it to the judicious reader himself to appreciate their just operation in lessening his esteem and veneration for this extraordinary personage. In contemplating the other qualities and endowments of our reformer we have no hesitation in affirming, that it is not easy to find a more blameless or even a more excellent character. No man since the apostles' days had penetrated into the sacred oracles with such singular felicity. He was endowed with a greatness of soul far beyond the common lot of men: dangerous gift in a fallen creature! It was through divine grace, that he was enabled to display and persevere in a conduct the most consistent, uncorrupt, and disinterested. His

bold and adventurous spirit never appears in any one instance to have made the smallest encroachment on the most perfect integrity. Humane, generous, and placable, he was rarely diverted from the path of equity; and, notwithstanding the uncommon vehemence of his temper, he was often submissive and condescending. With an exquisite sensibility and readiness of conception, with a zeal and an imagination, which never remitted their ardour for a single moment, he was most perfectly free from enthusiasm; and with a great capacity and unparalleled intrepidity, he seems to have been devoid of ambition and contented to live all his days in very moderate circumstances. ONLY the wise Disposer of all events, for the glory of his own name and for the revival of true religion in Europe, by the effectual operation of his holy Spirit, could have produced, at the season when most wanted, so faithful a champion, and possessed of so much vigour of intellect, of so daring a spirit, and of so truly humble and christian like a temper.

Such was the illustrious Luther, when he was called upon by divine providence, to enter the lists, alone and without one assured ally, against the hosts of the pretended successor of St. Peter, who was then domineering over the christian world in all his grandeur and plenitude of power.

I shall conclude this chapter with laying before the reader several concise testimonies to the talents and virtues of Luther, extracted from the writings of popish authors, who will not be suspected of any partiality towards the man, whom they have been accustomed to consider as a detestable heretic. To transcribe the various encomiums which have been written on this celebrated character by his friends and admirers, by protestant authors, and by historians in general, would be an endless labour.

The jesuit Maimbourg, in his History of Lutheranism, records many particulars respecting the learning and abilities of this celebrated heretic, as he calls him, which have not yet been mentioned.

" He possessed a quick and penetrating genius: he was indefatigable in his studies; and frequently so absorbed in them as to abstain from meat for whole days together. He acquired great knowledge of languages and of the fathers. He was remarkably strong and healthy, and of a sanguine, bilious, temperament. His eyes were piercing and full of fire. His voice sweet, and vehement when once fairly raised. He had a stern countenance; and though most intrepid and high spirited, he could dissemble the appearance of modesty and humility whenever he pleased, which however was not often the case. In his breast was lodged plenty of fuel for pride and presumption: hence his indiscriminate contempt of whatever opposed his heresies; hence his brutal treatment of kings, emperors, the pope, and of every thing in the world that is deemed most sacred and inviolable. Passionate, resentful, and domineering, he was continually aiming to distinguish himself by venting novel doctrines, and on no occasion could be induced to retract what he had once advanced. He maintained, that Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, Scotus, Bonaventura, and others, had undermined the foundations of true philosophy and of christian theology; and he endeavoured to raise up a system of his own, upon the ruins of those very great geniuses. This is an exact portrait of Martin Luther, of whom it may be truly said, there was in the man a great mixture both of good and of bad qualities: the bad predominated; but he was abundantly more corrupt in his thoughts and sentiments, than in his life and manners. He was always reckoned to live sufficiently blameless while he remained in the monastery, and till he absolutely ruined all his good qualities by his heresies."

Varillas, or Varillasius, a celebrated French historian, in his diffuse history of various heresies, speaks of Luther in the following manner. " This augustin monk united in his single person all the good and all the bad qualities of the heresiarchs of his time. To the robustness, health, and industry of a German, na-

ture seems here to have added the spirit and vivacity of an Italian. Nobody exceeded him in philosophy and scholastic theology; nobody equalled him in the art of speaking. He was a most perfect master of eloquence. He had completely discovered where lay the strength or the weakness of the human mind; and, accordingly, he knew how to render his attacks successful. However various or discordant might be the passions of his audience, he could manage them to his own purposes; for he presently saw the ground on which he stood; and even if the subject was too difficult for much argument, he carried his point by popular illustration and the use of figures. In ordinary conversations, he displayed the same power over the affections, which he had so often demonstrated in the professorial chair and the pulpit. He rarely attempted to convince; his method was to inflame men's passions, and afterwards gradually to insinuate his opinions. No man, either of his own time or since, spoke or wrote the German language, or understood its niceties, better than Luther. Often, when he had made his first impression by bold strokes of eloquence, or by a bewitching pleasantry of conversation, he completed his triumphs by the elegance of his German style. On the contrary, he was rude, satirical, ambitious, and ungrateful. Disposed to anger on the slightest occasions, and for the most part implacable. He was much addicted to excesses at the table, and was CAPABLE of the usual concomitant vices; though his monastic life deprived him almost entirely of opportunities of indulging himself in them."

No remarks need be made on these entertaining descriptions of Luther. The surmises and the exaggerations they contain, are sufficiently obvious: the reader will easily separate them from the truth, and will at the same time perceive how much the account, which we have given of our reformer, is corroborated by these enemies of the reformation.

Moreri, in his Historical Miscellany, says of Luther, "This heresiarch gloried in his apostasy, and in the la-

mentable schism of the church, and filled his writings with his poisons. He composed various works; and it cannot be denied that he was a man of much learning and fire of genius. Vanity was his motive, whatever pains may have been taken to represent him as a person of integrity and moderation. Henry VIII. king of England, in answer to Luther, had sent to pope Leo, a learned defence of the seven sacraments. Luther replied to the monarch in so insolent a manner, that it was easy to see from this single instance, that a man of such a temper could not be under the influence of the Spirit of God. Besides, he published a seditious book against the bishops; and had the IMPUDENCE TO OPPOSE THE POPE'S BULL, in which he himself was excommunicated."

As my chief object in giving these extracts is to satisfy the reader, from the testimony of Luther's enemies, of his great learning and talents, I content myself with quoting briefly the substance of what has been repeatedly and distinctly conceded by the most noted roman catholic writers, in regard to these points; and I entirely omit many scandalous falsehoods, which have been invented by malicious advocates for the papal system, with the view of defaming the character of our reformer. His two blemishes have been mentioned above, as allowed by the incomparable Seckendorff—and these—no judicious defender of protestants or of protestantism will ever undertake to defend.

Those, who wish to see a full account, and also a confutation, of the idle inventions and abominable falsehoods here alluded to, may consult with advantage, the celebrated Historical and Critical Dictionary by Peter Bayle. This author, though justly esteemed an infidel in religion, was a man of brilliant parts, and acute intellect; and he has collected together much useful information respecting Martin Luther, and both his friends and his adversaries.

"I," says this writer, "shall chiefly insist on the many falsehoods, which have been published respect-

ing Luther. No regard has been paid, in this point, to the rules of the art of slandering. And yet the authors of them have assumed all the confidence of those, who fully believe that the public will implicitly espouse their stories, be they ever so absurd. They accuse him of having confessed that he had struggled for ten years together with his conscience, and at last had become perfectly master of it, and fallen into atheism. They impudently maintain that he denied the immortality of the soul. They charge him with having gross and carnal ideas of heaven, and with composing hymns in honour of drunkenness. Most of these calumnies are grounded upon some words in a certain book published by Luther's friends, to which his adversaries give a horrid meaning, and very different from this ecclesiastic's real thoughts. His greatest enemies could not deny, that he had eminent qualities; and history affords nothing more surprising than his exploits. For a simple monk to give so rude a shock to popery, is what we cannot sufficiently admire. He had made great progress in scholastic learning, yet no one fell so foul upon the method of philosophizing at that time, nor was any man more vehemently bent against the great Aristotle."

The same author produces the following remarkable citation from a noted French writer, who was one of Luther's slanderers.* " Luther was a perfect atheist. His own disciple, Dr. Aurifaber, deposes, as an earwitness, that he heard Luther himself say in the pulpit, he thanked God he felt no longer any disturbance of his conscience, and that he began to see the fruits of his gospel among his disciples. " Nam post revelatum Evangelium meum," said he, " Virtus est occisa, justitia oppressa, temperantia ligata, veritas lacerata, fides clauda, nequitia quotidiana, devotio pulsa, hæresis relicta." Mons. Garasse translates this passage thus: " I have fought with such success, that I have stifled the seeds of virtue, oppressed justice.

* Monsr. Garasse

extinguished sobriety, rent truth to pieces, broken the pillars of faith, made villany familiar, banished devotion and introduced heresy." Upon which P. Bayle makes the following excellent observation. "There is no need to observe here, that all this is to be understood by the rules of contraries: the thing speaks for itself; and I am certain there is no honest man, whatever religion he is of, but will detest or pity the extravagance of such a slanderer." It is not at all improbable but Luther might use, in his pulpit, the very words here brought against him in accusation; nor is it necessary to suppose, that, in the warmth and haste of eloquence, he should even have used the words, THEY SAID, or MINE ENEMIES CRIED OUT, to make his meaning clear. Nothing can be more obvious than the sense of the citation, even as it stands. "After my way of expounding the gospel became known," says Luther,* THEY SAID, or MINE ENEMIES CRIED OUT: "Virtue is stifled, justice is oppressed," and so on; and we are left to wonder how an omission, which is quite common in all vehement harangues, whatever be the language spoken, could possibly be made, by any reasonable man, the occasion of so much calumny. Those, however, will wonder less, who have been accustomed to observe, how frequently it happens in our times, that sound and zealous preachers of the gospel are misrepresented and reviled, as though their interpretations of the nature of Christ's salvation had a tendency to promote licentiousness.

Let not the reader forget, that my present object is to produce evidences of Luther's learning and talents from the mouths of his adversaries, or at least from the mouths of those, who have shown no particular predilection for the pure gospel of Jesus Christ. It would be with much pain and reluctance, that I should be compelled to place the famous Erasmus among either of these classes. His great learning, his elegant taste, and his acute understanding, are all unquestion-

* All becomes clear by supposing the words here printed in capitals to have been implied, though not actually said.

able; neither is there any doubt how very serviceable his writings proved in preparing men's minds to approve the bolder and more decisive measures of Luther.* But still, in my judgment, the proofs of his love of ease, of fame, and of the esteem of persons of rank and consequence, are far more numerous, than any examples which can be produced of his sincere regard for the essential doctrines of christianity, or of the evangelical humility of his own mind. Though it may be extremely difficult to delineate accurately a character of this sort, his observations, nevertheless, on the great men and great transactions of his own times, cannot fail to be valuable. Moreover, as Erasmus at no time, I believe, was very fond of Luther, and as they very much opposed and controverted each other's opinions, the judgment of this illustrious scholar respecting the great Saxon reformer, may be laid before the reader in this place with much propriety. Indeed the following extracts are the more important and also suitable to be cited here, because, first, they decisively prove the abilities of Luther, and secondly, they contain many facts and circumstances, which demonstrate the knowledge, learning and integrity of our reformer, and lastly, they very materially corroborate the preceding account of the state of the religious world in general, when this extraordinary man began his opposition to the existing ecclesiastical tyranny.

Erasmus had so good an opinion of Luther's intentions, that in one of his epistles, he expresses his belief, "That God had sent him to reform mankind." Melancthon, in his life of Luther, assures us from his own knowledge, that the elector of Saxony, besought Erasmus in the very kindest manner, to tell him freely, whether he judged Luther to be mistaken, respecting the principal controversies in which he was then engaged; and that Erasmus, on this occasion, spoke out, 'That Luther's sentiments were true; but that he

* See p. 252. of this vol.

wished to see more mildness in his manner." In another letter to the elector he says, "The cause of Luther is invidious, because, he at once attacks the bellies of the monks and the diadem of the pope." In various other letters, and particularly, in one written to cardinal Campegius in the year 1520, Erasmus opens his mind freely concerning Luther and his proceedings. He acknowledges that he possessed great natural talents; and that he had a genius particularly adapted to the explanation of difficult points of literature, and for rekindling the sparks of genuine evangelical doctrine, which were almost extinguished by the trifling subtilties of the schools. He adds, that men of the very best character, of the soundest learning, and of the most religious principles, were much pleased with Luther's books; further, that in proportion as any person was remarkable for upright morals and gospel purity, he had the less objections to Luther's sentiments. "Besides," said he, "the life of the man is extolled even by those who cannot bear his doctrines. Some, indeed, in hatred to his person, condemn what is true, pervert and misinterpret what is right, and make him pass for a heretic, for saying the same things which they allow to have been pious and orthodox in Bernard and Austin." Erasmus declares, that he had endeavoured, to the utmost of his power, to hinder Luther from being oppressed by a faction of raging zealots. It grieved him that a man of such FINE PARTS should be rendered desperate by the mad cries and bellowings of the monks. We ought, continued this sagacious Hollander, "to take notice of the source and spring of all this evil. The world was burthened with human inventions in the business of religion, loaded with the opinions and doctrines of the schools, and oppressed with the tyranny of the monks and begging friars. I do not condemn them all, but many of them are so mad, that for the sake of interest and rule, they hamper the consciences of men on purpose. They lay aside Christ and modesty, they preach nothing but their own innovations.

and oftentimes scandalous doctrines. They speak of indulgences after such a manner, as is insupportable even to the laity. By these and such like methods, the power of the gospel is dwindled to nothing; and it is to be feared, that matters becoming continually worse, the little spark of christian piety, by which the stifled spirit of charity might be rekindled, will be intirely quenched. The chief parts of religion are lost in ceremonies more than judaical. Good men lament and weep for these things; and even divines, who are not monks, acknowledge the truth of them, as also some of the monks in their private conversations. These things, I believe, first put Luther upon the dangerous work of opposing some of the most intolerable and shameless abuses. For what can we think otherwise of a person, who neither aims at worldly honour nor riches? I do not now consider the charges which they bring against the man; I speak only of the apparent grounds of their animosity towards him. Luther had the boldness to call in question the GOOD of indulgences; but others had first spoken too much and too boldly for them. Luther has dared to speak indecently of the power of the pope of Rome; but others had first exalted it too indecently; and in particular, three preaching friars, Alvarus, Sylvester, and the cardinal of St. Sixtus. He dared to despise the decrees of Thomas Aquinas; but the dominicans had extolled them almost above the gospel. He dared to disclose some doubts in the matter of confession, but the monks continually perplexed the consciences of men upon that head. He dared to reject the conclusions of the schools in part; but others ascribed too much to them, and yet disagreed with them as well as he, altering them often, and introducing new notions in the place of those they abolished. It was matter of grief to pious minds, to hear almost nothing said in the schools of the doctrines of the gospel, and that, in the sermons, little mention was made of Christ, but much of papal power, and of the opinions of recent writers. Luther has written a

great deal that relishes more of imprudence than irreligion; but the greatest offence he has given, is, his want of respect to Thomas Aquinas; his lessening of the profits of indulgences; his despising of the mendicant friars; his preferring of the gospel to the doctrines of the schools; his opposing of the sophistries of disputants; all these are intolerable heresies."*

The reader, in this last instance, has had before him a witness, perfectly competent to decide on many of the points which usually afford matter for much controversy between papists and protestants; and, as we trust, the true character of the Saxon reformer, in regard to his motives, abilities, and learning, is now fully ascertained; we return to the narrative of the progress of the dispute concerning the sale of indulgences.

CHAP. III.

The Progress of the Controversy concerning Indulgences, till the Conclusion of the Conferences between Luther and Cajetan.

TETZEL the dominican, alarmed at the publication of Luther's theses, opposed to them one hundred and six propositions, in which he attempted to refute the arguments of the augustin monk; and not content with this, by virtue of his inquisitorial authority, he also directed Luther's compositions to be burnt. It appears from very authentic documents,† that this shameless monk was an experienced veteran in the traffic of indulgences. He himself, in the year 1507, that is, ten years before the present dispute with Luther, had collected at Friberg two thousand florins in the space of two days by the iniquitous sale of that

* Vid. Erasm. Epis. and Brandt's History of the Reformation.
† Moller. Cron. Fribergen.

article. The sale of indulgences, therefore, was no new thing in the papal system; and the instance before us proves, that, occasionally at least, the scandalous practice might be carried to a very great extent. It is, however, a relief to the indignant mind, to find that ecclesiastical history furnishes some few examples of pious christians with enlightened understandings, who had bravely withstood the growing corruption. To mention one: John, bishop of Misnia, had effectually discharged from his own diocese the popish proclaimers of indulgences, who, like merchants, had been vending every where their certificates of pardon of sins, as if they were an ordinary commodity.* He had blamed the people for foolishly putting their money into a chest, of which they had not the key; and had declared that, by reading the bible, he had discovered the apostolical religion to be very different from that which prevailed at present. This good prelate, a little before his death, happening to hear that Tetzel was again employed in a similar way, prophesied he would be the last of the dealers in indulgences, on account of his shameless audacity.† Notwithstanding this, and every other warning or remonstrance, the dominican commissioner persevered in the traffic with augmented industry; and so much incensed the minds of Luther's disciples at Wittemberg, that they ventured, by way of retaliation, to burn publicly his propositions, or theses,‡ as they were called, with every mark of

* Chytr. Lib. ii.

† "A soul," said Tetzel in his theses, "may go to heaven, in the very moments, in which the money is cast into the chest. The man, who buys off his own sins by indulgences, merits more than he who gives alms to the poor, unless it be in extreme necessity." Other extraordinary assertions are likewise contained in his tracts, which demonstrate that protestant writers have not misrepresented the controversy before us. Suffice it to mention two sentences more. "The ministers of the church do not barely declare men's sins forgiven, but do really pardon them by virtue of the sacraments, and by the power of the keys. They may impose a punishment to be suffered AFTER DEATH; and it is better to send a penitent with a small penance into purgatory, than by refusing him absolution to send him into hell." Du Pin, b. ii. Seck. lib. i.

‡ When Tetzel was at Leipsic, and had scraped together a great deal of money from all ranks of people, a nobleman, who suspected the imposture, put this question to him, "Can you grant absolution for a sin, which

disapprobation and ignominy. Luther was much grieved at this rash action; and finding himself to be accused of instigating his followers to commit it, writes thus to a friend: "I wonder, you could believe, that I was the author of the deed. Think you that I am so destitute of common sense, as to stigmatize, in such a manner, a person in so high an office? I know better the rules of ecclesiastical subordination, and have more regard to my own character, both as a monk and as a theologian than to act so." There were also persons, who, pretending to be in possession of court intrigues, were fond of circulating the report, that Luther had published his theses by the secret instigations of the elector Frederic. Luther, with great concern, takes notice of this false surmise. In a letter to his friend Spalatinus he thus expresses his feelings. "I am heartily vexed at the scandalous report, which is diffused with much malignity, namely, that in all I do, I am only the ENGINE of our illustrious prince, for the purpose of disgracing the archbishop of Mentz. What do you think I ought to do on the occasion? Shall I open the matter to the elector? I am extremely concerned, that the prince should be suspected on my account, and I cannot bear the thought of being the origin of contention among persons of so great dignity."

Luther also published a sermon preached against indulgences, which Tetzel answered; and this produced a reply from Luther. About the same time,

a man shall intend to commit in future?" "Yes," replied the frontless commissioner, "but on condition that the proper sum of money be actually paid down." The nobleman instantly produced the sum demanded; and in return, received a diploma sealed and signed by Tetzel, absolving him from the unexplained crime, which he secretly intended to commit. Not long after, when Tetzel was about to leave Leipsic, the nobleman made inquiry respecting the road he would probably travel, waited for him in ambush at a convenient place, attacked and robbed him; then beat him soundly with a stick, sent him back again to Leipsic with his chest empty, and at parting said: "This is the fault I intended to commit, and for which I have your absolution."

This humorous story may seem scarcely worthy of the dignity of history; but it is recorded by the cautious Seckendorf, and may serve to show the almost incredible lengths to which the popish agents proceeded in the detestable traffic so clearly laid open by this anecdote.

Henry, duke of Brunswick, who was afterwards distinguished among the most active enemies of lutheranism, appeared in the contest; and in a public writing accused Frederic of secretly supporting Luther. The well known character of the elector, for caution and prudence, seems however to have prevented the report from gaining much credit. This prince took extraordinary care not to involve himself unnecessarily in the concerns of Luther. Our intrepid reformer, in all his opposition to Tetzel, most certainly had no colleague or assistant; and he himself declared, that he never had conversed with the elector Frederic in his whole life.

Luther never did things by halves. Accordingly, as the affair of selling indulgences had laid firm hold of his mind, he could neither quiet his uneasiness, nor smother his indignation. He still continued to preach and to write on the same subject, till the end of the year 1517. In the next year he went to Heidelberg, and was courteously received by Wolfgang, the brother of the elector Palatine, who was the scholar of Oecolampadius, a name, afterwards renowned among the reformers. Luther had been advised by his friends not to go to Heidelberg on account of the danger to which he might be exposed. But, as a general assembly of the augustinian monks had been called at that place, he thought it right to obey his superiors, whatever might be the event. The official business of the assembly was of no great moment; and therefore we need not be surprized that the zealous and active spirit of Luther was not content with barely discharging the duties of his order. A providential opportunity was offered of propagating divine truth, and it behooved him not to neglect it. While, therefore, he remained at this place, he wrote some propositions, in which he opposed the prevailing notions* concerning justification, faith, and works. His capital object in them was to demonstrate the doctrine of justification,

* Seckend. 29. from a MS. Hist. of the Palatine Churches by Altingius

before God, by faith, and not by our works and deservings. The theses or positions, which he intended to defend, were publicly exposed to view in writing according to custom; and he called upon Leonard Bejer, a monk of the augustinian order to be his respondent. The professors of the university disapproved of the controversy; and therefore it was held in the augustinian monastery. A large concourse of people attended, and a number of the learned bore a part in the disputation. Among the hearers were Martin Bucer, and John Brentius, men, afterwards eminent in the work of reformation. These and other persons, who in process of time became celebrated theologians, admired the acuteness, promptitude, and meekness of Luther; were struck with the truths of the gospel which were new to their ears, and desired further instruction of him in private. This was the seed time of the gospel in the Palatinate; and these were the beginnings of the reformation in that electorate. Luther's disciples cultivated and taught the same doctrines in private, and after a time ventured to teach them publicly in the university.

While the cause of evangelical truth was thus making gradual advances in Germany, two celebrated romanists, Eckius of Ingolstadt, and Prierias a dominican, master of the sacred palace at Rome, took up their pens against the theses of Luther, who, by these means was led into a fresh literary contest. Luther published elaborate answers on all the disputed points; and managed this part of the controversy with so much moderation and gentleness, that his inimical historian Maimbourgh, has no way left of reviling the man he dislikes, but by saying, "On this occasion, he acted contrary to his natural disposition." Let the reader infer the real disposition of Luther from authenticated facts, and not from the insinuations of prejudiced papists. At this time, he wrote also to his own diocesan, and to his vicar general. To his diocesan, the bishop of Brandenburgh, he declared, that he did not DETERMINE, but DISPUTE, using the liberty allowed to scho-

lastic men in all ages. "I fear not," says he, "bulls and menaces; it is the audaciousness and the ignorance of men, that induce me to stand forth, though with much reluctance. Were there not a weighty cause for it, no one, out of my own little sphere, should ever hear of me. If the cause I defend, be not the work of God, I would have nothing to do with it; let it perish. Let him alone have glory, to whom alone glory belongs." He endeavoured to rouse the spirit of his vicar general, thus: "When I first heard you say, 'that true repentance begins with the love of righteousness and of God,' the words made a deep and durable impression on my heart, as if they had come by a voice directly from heaven." Hence, he said, he was filled with grief to see the true doctrine of repentance, superceded by indulgences. He expressed his great unwillingness to be drawn into the contest; but, being defamed as an enemy of the pope, he felt himself constrained to defend his own character. He, therefore, begged Staupitius to transmit his trifling writings, as he calls them, to pope Leo X., that they might speak for him at Rome. "Not," says he, "that I would involve YOU in my dangers. I desire alone to stand the shock of the contest. Let Christ see to it, whether the cause be mine or his. To the kind admonitions of my friends who would warn me of danger, my answer is, the poor man has no fears; I protest, that property, reputation, and honours, shall all be of no estimation with me, compared with the defence of truth. I have only a frail body to lose, and that weighed down with constant fatigue. If, in obedience to God, I loose it through violence or fraud, what is the loss of a few hours of life? Sufficient for me is the lovely redeemer and advocate, my Lord Jesus Christ, to whose praise I will sing as long as I live."

In a private letter of this kind, written to a friend much older than himself, and whom he honoured as his father, every candid person must see that Luther would open the genuine feelings of his soul. This single fact, therefore, is decisive against the constant,

but groundless, assertion of his adversaries, " that he was secretly encouraged and supported in this perilous contest by Staupitius." There is no doubt, that both his diocesan and his vicar general valued him extremely for his talents and piety; nor were either of them destitute of some evangelical light: the latter especially, as we have seen, had been serviceable to the young augustin monk in his early conflicts of temptation. But neither the former, nor the latter, had the knowledge, the courage, the faithfulness of Luther.

His controversial writings, published in the year 1518, in explanation and support of the various doctrines he had advanced, are full of important matter, and very much lay open the real state of his mind at that time. And these writings also, such was his regard for ecclesiastical discipline, he thought proper to transmit both to his ordinary and to his vicar general. Among many other positions maintained in them, are the following: " That every true christian may become partaker of the grace of Christ without pontifical indulgences. A christian," says he, " may glory that in Christ he has all things; that all the righteousness and merits of Christ are his own by virtue of that spiritual union with him, which he has by faith: on the other hand, that all his sins are no longer his, but that Christ, through the same union, bears the burden of them. And this is the confidence of christians, this is the refreshment of their consciences, that by faith our sins cease to be ours judicially, because they are laid on him the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world."

" I was compelled," continues Luther, " in my conscience to expose the scandalous sale of indulgences. I saw some seduced by them into mischievous errors, others tempted into an audacious profaneness. In a word, the proclaiming and selling of pardons proceeded to such an unbounded licentiousness, that the holy church and its authorities became subjects of open derision in the public taverns. There was no occasion

to excite the hatred of mankind against priests to a greater degree. The avarice and profligacy of the clergy had, for many years past, kindled the indignation of the laity. Alas! they have not a particle of respect or honour for the priesthood, except what solely arises from fear of punishment; and I speak plainly, unless their dislike and their objections be attended to and moderated, not by mere power, but by substantial reasons and reformations, all these evils will grow worse."

From these extracts* the reader will be enabled to from his own judgment of Luther, as a divine, as a statesman, and as an honest man. He wrote a letter to the pope himself, respecting the same transactions, in which he expresses himself in so dutiful and ceremonious a manner, and even in strains of such submissive and prostrate subjection, as sufficiently show, that at that time he was far from meditating a separation from the church of Rome. Maimbourg himself appears to have very much felt the force of Luther's ingenuous declarations and general conduct in these proceedings. He thinks, he probably might have been sincere in his professions of obedience to the Roman see, "because," says he, "it was so contrary to his nature to play the hypocrite for any considerable time together." The same author adds, "whether he was really sincere, or not, his modest and plausible manner of expressing his doubts, procured him the approbation of many. He was looked on as an honest inquirer after truth who had detected the frauds of his adversaries, and, in that way, had unjustly brought upon himself the name of heretic."†

The preceding detail of facts and observations unavoidably lead the mind to this conclusion. Luther was far advanced in evangelical knowledge, and ap-

* The extracts here given are almost literal translations. But every one, who has been used to the making of extracts, knows, that in many cases where a great deal is omitted for the sake of brevity, it is necessary to add a few words to prevent obscurities. This, however, should always be done with the greatest care, so as not to affect the sense.

† Maimb. p. 28. in Seck.

pears to have been an experienced christian some time before he became known to the world. Yet was he still strongly wedded to the habits of superstition; and he slowly admitted the conviction of the antichristian character of the hierarchy. He dreaded the sin of schism: and the impetuous fire of his temper was perpetually checked by the admonitions of conscience, and by the fear of offending his Maker. In this singular character, there was certainly united an assemblage of qualities, rarely found together in the same person; in particular, the greatest caution in conduct with a temper remarkably ardent and choleric. Too often this last betrayed him into a blameable asperity of language, yet seldom does it seem to have influenced his measures or plans of action. The poet's simple, but sublime, description of one of his dramatic heroes,* "he feared God, and he feared none besides," is eminently true of the Saxon theologian.

Whoever keeps in view the natural and religious dispositions of Luther, while he contemplates the critical situation of this reformer, during the suspense of his contest with the papal authorities, cannot fail to conclude, that he must have experienced great anxiety and even perturbation of mind in that memorable season. The precise nature of his feelings will be best understood from his own account of them, in a preface to the edition of his Theses, which was published by himself many years after the termination of the dispute. "I permit," says he, "the publication of my propositions against indulgences for this reason, that the greatness of the success may be attributed to God, and that I may not be exalted in mine own eyes. For, by these propositions† it will appear how weak and contemptible I was, and in how fluctuating a state of mind, when I began this business. I found myself involved in it alone, and as it were, by surprise. And

* Racine in his Athaliah.

† It is not necessary to enter into a detail of these propositions or theses, because the cause of indulgences has now no advocates in this country.

when it became impossible for me to retreat, I made many concessions to the pope; not, however, in many important points; but, certainly, at that time I adored him in earnest. In fact, how despised, and wretched a monk was I then; more like a lifeless body than a human being! Whereas in regard to the pope, how great was his majesty! The potentates of the earth dreaded his nod. How distressed my heart was in that year, 1517, and the following, how submissive my mind was to the hierarchy, not feignedly but really; nay, how I was almost driven to despair, through the agitations of care and fear and doubt, those secure spirits little know, who at this day insult the majesty of the pope with much pride and arrogance! But I, who then alone sustained the danger, was not so certain, not so confident. I was ignorant of many things, which now, by the grace of God, I understand. I disputed, and I was open to conviction. Not finding satisfaction in the books of theologians and canonists, I wished to consult the living members of the church itself. There were indeed some godly souls, who intirely approved my propositions, but I did not consider their authority as of weight with me in spiritual concerns. The popes, cardinals, bishops, and monks, were the objects of my confidence. I waited for divine instruction with such ardent and continued eagerness, and was so overloaded with cares, that I became almost stupid, or distracted: I scarcely knew when I was asleep, or when awake. At length, after I became enabled to answer every objection that could be brought against me from the scriptures, one difficulty still remained, and only one; namely, that the CHURCH ought to be obeyed. By the grace of Christ I, at last, overcame this difficuly also. Most certainly I had formerly a much greater veneration for the Roman church than those have, who at this day, with a perverse spirit of opposition, extol popery so exceedingly against me."

Let us now listen to a few sentences of Luther, written so late as the year 1545, that is, about twenty-

eight years after the beginning of the dispute concerning indulgences.* "Before all things I entreat you, pious reader, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake, to read my writings with cool consideration, and even with much pity. I wish you to know, that when I began the affair of the indulgences at the very first, I was a monk, and a most mad papist. So intoxicated was I and drenched in papal dogmas that I would have been most ready at all times to murder or assist others in murdering any person, who should have uttered a syllable against the duty of obedience to the pope. I was a complete SAUL; and there are many such yet. There were, however, and are now, others, who appear to me to adhere to the pope on the principles of Epicurus; that is, for the sake of indulging their appetites; when secretly they even deride him, and are as cold as ice, if called upon to defend the papacy. I was never one of these: I was always a sincere believer; I was always earnest in defending the doctrines I professed; I went seriously to work, as one who had a horrible dread of the day of judgment, and who, from his inmost soul, was anxious for salvation.

You will find, therefore, in my earlier writings, with how much humility, on many occasions, I gave up very considerable points to the pope, which I now detest as blasphemous and abominable in the highest degree. This ERROR, my slanderers call INCONSISTENCY: but you, pious reader, will have the kindness to make some allowance on account of the times and my inexperience. I stood absolutely alone at first; and certainly I was very unlearned and very unfit to undertake matters of such vast importance. It was by accident, not willingly or by design, that I fell into these violent disputes: I call God to witness.

In the year 1517, when I was a young preacher, and dissuaded the people from purchasing indulgences, telling them they might employ their time much bet-

* Latin preface to the first volume of Luther's works.

ter than in listening to the greedy proclaimers of that scandalous article of sale, I felt assured I should have the pope on my side; for he himself, in his public decrees, had condemned the excesses of his agents in that business.

My next step was to complain to my own ordinary, and also to the archbishop of Mentz; but I knew not at that time that half of the money went to this last mentioned prelate, and the other half to the pope. The remonstrances of a low, mean, poor, brother in Christ had no weight. Thus despised, I published a brief account of the dispute, along with a sermon in the German language on the subject of indulgences; and very soon after I published also explanations of my sentiments, in which, for the honour of the pope, I contended, that the indulgences were not entirely to be condemned, but that real works of charity were of FAR MORE CONSEQUENCE.

This was to set the world on fire, and disturb the whole order of the universe. At once and against me single, the whole popedom rose!!".....

It will be needless to proceed further with this extract: the account is in entire unison with the preceding one written many years before. The candid and ingenuous acknowledgments and declarations contained in each of them cannot fail to affect the reader's mind, particularly as they were all made by our reformer long after the transactions to which they relate, and at times when disguise and misrepresentation could serve no imaginable purpose. A more complete answer to the unwarrantable censures of those, who accuse Luther of selfish motives in promoting the reformation, can scarcely be conceived. But after all, the best use to be made of the information here given is, to admire and adore the providence and grace of that God, WHO IS WONDERFUL IN COUNSEL AND EXCELLENT IN WORKING.*

While the literary contest was carrying on between

* Isaiah, xxviii.

Luther and his antagonists, there were at Rome those, who blamed the pope for not interesting himself in a controversy, which, by exciting a spirit of resistance, and producing divisions, daily increased in magnitude and importance, and which, in its termination, might prove extremely injurious to the authority of the romish church. With how much indifference and contempt Leo X. at first beheld the ecclesiastical disputes in Germany; how indolent was the disposition of this pontiff, and how improvident he showed himself in defending the papal jurisdiction; all this appears in the strongest light from the absurd and careless answer which he is said to have given to Silvester Prierias,* when that zealous and learned dominican showed him some of Luther's heretical publications concerning indulgences. "BROTHER MARTIN," said he, "IS A MAN OF A VERY FINE GENIUS, and these squabbles are the mere effusions of monastic envy." Prierias, however, undertook the support of the pontifical authority; but, in writing against the reformer, he managed the romish cause with so much heat and imprudence, that the pope himself presently directed him to be silent in future.† This writer, in the event, did much service to lutheranism. In an affair, which required the utmost delicacy, he expressed his sentiments without the least caution or moderation; and exalted the pope's power even far beyond that of all general councils. Luther availed himself of the temerity of his adversary, and publicly exposed, with much severity, the odious doctrines which he had inculcated.

In the same year, 1518, a rash author of a similar description, attacked Luther with all the virulence of an enraged and bigoted roman catholic. This was Hogostratus, a German dominican inquisitor, who represented the growing heresy as now become incurable by any of the milder methods. Penal and compulsory remedies, he said, were absolutely necessary;

* Prierias was master of the sacred palace, and general of his order He died of the plague in 1523.

† Erasm. Epis.

and he exhorted the pontiff, by means of the sword and fire, to deliver mankind from the detestable innovator.* Many of the monks† joined in this clamour with incessant vociferation among the people. Scarcely a word came from their mouths, except, Heresy! Blasphemy! Schism! "I relate," says Erasmus, "what I saw with my own eyes; and am convinced that no one thing tended more to dispose the people in Luther's favour, than this imprudent conduct of the clergy. His propositions concerning the indulgences were soberly stated; and if THEY had but argued the points in dispute in the same cool way, these ruinous consequences would never have taken place."

At length the Roman pontiff was roused from his state of indolence and security. Not only the avaricious venders of indulgences vociferated against Luther, as Demetrius and the silversmiths did against St. Paul when their craft was in danger,‡ but, from all quarters, complaints of the progress of heresy were sent to Rome. Even the emperor Maximilian I. represented to the pope, how necessary his interference was become. The augustin monk, he said, was disseminating heretical and destructive doctrines; was obstinate in adhering to his opinions, and active in propagating them; and he had made many converts, even among persons of rank and distinction.§

The imprudence of Leo X. at this critical moment, may seem almost the consequence of judicial infatuation. At once he passed from the extremes of neglect and indifference to those of tyrannical violence and blind temerity. He ordered Luther to appear at Rome within sixty days to answer for himself before certain judges, of whom his antagonist Silvester Prierias, was appointed one. Our reformer took the wisest method to protect himself against the impending storm. He instantly sent an account of the pope's citation to his friend Spalatinus, who was then with the elector Frederic at the diet of Augsburg; and in the strongest

* Maimb. p. 38. † Erasm. Epis. ‡ Acts, xix. 24.
§ Maximilian's Letter. Op. Luth. vol. i.

terms requested that, through the interposition of the prince, his cause might be heard in Germany and not at Rome. Frederic the WISE understood the arts and practice of the court of Rome, and was convinced of the propriety, and even the necessity of seconding Luther's wishes. Accordingly he urged the competency of a German tribunal in an ecclesiastical controversy of that nature; and it seems intirely owing to the address, the penetration, and the firmness of this great prince, that the Roman pontiff at last consented, that cardinal Cajetan, who was then his legate at Augsburg, should take cognisance of the matter. If the delinquent showed proper marks of penitence and submission, he was to be kindly received again into the bosom of the church; but if he refused to appear before his appointed judge, the legate was commissioned then to denounce publicly, against him and his adherents, all the thunders and anathemas of papal indignation.*

Leo X., perceiving how great a favourite Luther was with the elector of Saxony, judged it expedient, by all the means in his power, to secure the support and concurrence of that prince in an affair, which he had now begun to consider as of the greatest moment. For this purpose, he acquainted Frederic, in a polite and affectionate, but very artful epistle, of the measures which he had been compelled to adopt, through the disobedience of an augustin monk, whose very "order and profession should have perpetually reminded him of the duties of humility and obsequiousness." He styles Luther a son of iniquity, a prevaricator, who boasts of the protection of the elector, but, in fact, reverences no superior whatever. I know, says the pope, he has no ground for representing you as one, who encourages and supports him; nevertheless I exhort you in the Lord, and as you would preserve the reputation and dignity of a good catholic prince, to be on your guard, lest the lustre of your highly

* The pope's directions to Cajetan, Luther, Op. vol. i.

honoured ancestors should be in any degree tarnished by this calumny. I know of no blame respecting you; but I would wish you to avoid the very suspicion of blame, in which the rashness of this man may involve you. He then proceeds: As many learned and religious persons, and in particular, our beloved son, Prierias, the master of our sacred palace, have informed us of the heretical proceedings of Martin Luther, we have ordered him to be called upon to answer for himself; and for this purpose, we have given EXPLICIT DIRECTIONS to cardinal Cajetan, our legate. Lastly, he concludes with a strong exhortation and injunction, that Frederic, in virtue of the holy obedience which he owed to the Roman church, should contribute his utmost to secure the person of Luther, and deliver him up to the power of the holy see: he declared, however, at the same time, that if he was found innocent, he should be dismissed in peace and in favour; and even if he was guilty, he would exercise clemency towards him largely upon his repentance.*

It is well worthy of notice that, in this epistle, the pope suppresses a very material fact, namely, that Luther had, already and without trial, been condemned at Rome, as a heretic, by the bishop of Ascoli, the auditor of the apostolic chamber. This clearly appears from the pope's own BRIEF, which he sent to cardinal Cajetan along with the abovementioned directions; and the poor persecuted monk, in his writings, makes several pertinent observations upon the occasion. The pleasantest thing of all, says he, is this. The pope's BRIEF is dated August the twenty third. I was cited and admonished on the seventh of August, to appear at Rome, within sixty days. Thus it is very plain, that, either before the citation was delivered to me, or at most within sixteen days after, the bishop of Ascoli proceeded against me, judged me, and pronounced me an incorrigible heretic. If I should ask, What are

* Pope's letter to the elector of Saxony. tom. i. Witt. p. 204.

become of the sixty days mentioned in the citation delivered to me, which are to be reckoned from the seventh of August, and would end about the seventh of October? Is it the usage of the pope's court to cite, admonish, accuse, judge, condemn, and pronounce sentence, all on the same day, and especially, when the supposed culprit is at a considerable distance and totally ignorant of the proceedings? Again, how can they charge me with having abused the pope's kindness, and with persevering obstinately in heresy? Would they be able to give any other answer to these questions than that, when they fabricated the falsehoods respecting me, they had lost their memory, and stood in need of a few doses of hellebore.

The condemnation of Luther at Rome, previous to his examination before Cajetan, was so important a fact, and implied so much violence and animosity in Leo and his advisers, that it may well be doubted whether our reformer, intrepid as he was, if he had been acquainted with all the circumstances of his disgrace and danger, would have ventured to have appeared at all at Augsburg. It is clear from one of his letters to Spalatinus,* that on his return from that place, he first learnt at Nuremburg the nature and extent of the papal commission to the cardinal, namely, that already being pronounced a pertinacious heretic, his person was to be secured and kept in safety, till further orders for his removal to Rome.

The elector of Saxony conducted himself throughout this difficult transaction with the most extraordinary discretion. He was determined not to permit Luther to be sent to Rome, where he would be at the mercy of his enraged adversaries; but, for the purpose of carrying this point the more easily, and also in the hope that an accommodation might take place with the Roman see, he promised the pope's legate, that he would take effectual care to place the supposed heretic before him, for examination, at Augsburg. We have

* Lib. i. epist.

observed indeed,* that it was part of the pope's instructions to Cajetan, to show every kindness to Luther provided he came voluntarily to confess his fault and sue for pardon; but, what was to be done in case he should refuse, which was the thing by far the more probable to happen? Luther himself in his account of this matter says, "Every thing, I doubt not, would have been settled in the most peaceable and affectionate manner, if I would but have written down six letters, REVOCO, I RECANT."

Frederic provided for the safety of his favourite Luther in the following manner. He gave him letters of recommendation to the senate and principal inhabitants of Augsburg; who, instantly on his arrival, exhorted him not to appear before the cardinal, till he had obtained a promise of safe conduct from the emperor, who was then hunting at some distance from the city. Through the influence of these same persons, this important request of safe conduct was granted; and after three days the emperor's council announced to the cardinal, that the public faith was pledged to Luther, and therefore he must take no violent steps against him. The cardinal answered, "It is very well, nevertheless I shall do my duty."

Luther informs us, that, during those three days, he was constantly pressed by a very troublesome emissary of Cajetan to recant. If I would but recant, he said, all would be right. He further relates a curious conversation which took place between himself and this emissary. He came on the third day and expostulated as follows:

Why will you not go to the cardinal; he is waiting to receive you in the kindest manner?

I must listen to the advice of those excellent persons to whom I am recommended by the elector; and they tell me, I must by no means go to him till I have obtained the public faith. The moment THAT is obtained, I am ready to go.

* Page 310.

What, said he, evidently in much agitation, do you think that prince Frederic will take up arms on your account?

It is very far from my wish.

Where do you mean to stay?

In the open air.

Pray, suppose you had the pope and his cardinals all in your power, what would you do with them?

I would treat them with the greatest respect and honour.

So; said he, waving his hand in the Italian manner, and went away, and returned no more.*

A short time before these transactions at Augsburg, the celebrated Melancthon had been received, as Greek professor at the university of Wittemberg, in the twenty-second year of his age. The lectures of this truly learned and good man, together with those of Luther, were attended by crowds of students: and the university of Leipsic, a city wholly under Roman influence, on account of the principles of its sovereign, George of Saxony, declined in its lustre. The consequence was, that Luther became still more odious to the hierarchy. Add to this, his defence of his theses, and a sermon, against the abuses of officials in excommunications, just published, had exasperated his adversaries to the highest degree. We learn, from his letters to Staupitius and Spalatinus, what were the feelings and reflections of our hero at this alarming conjuncture. To the former he said, "doubt not but I mean to be free in searching and handling the word of God. These citations and menaces move me not." To the latter he writes thus: "From the bottom of my heart, I wish not to involve the elector in my perils. There is but one thing, which I hope he may be able to do for me, namely to prevent any violence on my person. And if he cannot do even that conveniently, I would have all the danger to be my own. What I have undertaken to defend, I trust, I shall defend effectually.

* Luth. Præf.

It may be found necessary to pay some regard to self-preservation, but a regard to truth is paramount to every consideration." This is the language of one who was well instructed in christian principles, and knew the practice of holy men in the purest times.

Certainly, at first, Luther seems to have doubted whether he should not be guilty of an unjustifiable temerity, in stirring a single step towards Augsburg, without the previous grant of a safe conduct. But, his scruples were done away by the generous behaviour of the elector. This excellent prince not only gave him the abovementioned letters of recommendation, but also furnished him with money for his journey; informed him, by Spalatinus, that he might proceed to Augsburg, without need of a safe conduct, such was the legate's benevolent intentions towards him; and encouraged him to believe that, whatever might happen, he would not permit him to be dragged to the papal tribunal at Rome. It is most probable however, that Frederic the WISE, either foresaw the effect which his letters of recommendation would produce at Augsburg, or had otherwise secretly provided that the public faith should be engaged for the persecuted reformer. He was a prince, says Luther,* of incredible capacity and penetration, and was accustomed to take effectual measures for disconcerting the romanists, long before they entertained the least suspicion that he was aware of their designs. It was much against the inclination of Cajetan, that the emperor Maximilian granted a safe conduct on this occasion. That irritated legate wrote to Frederic, and in much anger informed him, that he had expressly told the imperial council he would not have the name of Cajetan mentioned in that part of the transaction."† He is usually called Cajetan, though his real name was Thomas de Vio, of the town of Cajeta. He is allowed by Luther himself to have been naturally a man of a benevolent temper. Yet the

* Luther. Op. vol. i.
† Epist. Cajet. ad Sax. duc. Father Paul, C. Trent, b. 1.

choosing of this cardinal for the purpose of reconciling matters must not be produced as an example of discretion in Leo X. Thomas de Vio was excessively superstitious, and also entertained the most lofty ideas of papal authority. He wrote a book on the power of the Roman pontiff, which is said to have procured for him the archbishopric of Palermo and a cardinal's hat. Add to all this, he was a dominican, and consequently the declared enemy of Luther and the friend of Tetzel. Such a person was ill fitted to sit as judge or arbitrator in this nice and perilous controversy.

At the first interview, Luther prostrated himself before the cardinal, and was courteously received. But, at the same time, he was required to retract his errors, to avoid them in future, and to abstain from every thing, which might disturb the peace of the church. And these three things were stated expressly to be the order of the most holy pope. Luther desired that he might be permitted to see the pope's BRIEF. But this request was peremptorily refused.*

The heaviest charge against him seems to have been, that he had transgressed the bull of Clement VI., which had defined the nature and extent of indulgences; and it may easily be conceived, with how much indignation the cardinal would hear the defence of Luther, namely, that the holy scriptures, which he could produce in support of his own doctrines, had abundantly more weight with him than a pontifical bull, which in fact proved nothing, but merely recited the opinion of Thomas Aquinas. Cajetan, in answer, exalted the authority of the pope above all councils,

* This important circumstance is not taken notice of by the ecclesiastical historians; though I find Luther himself in his celebrated letter to the elector of Saxony, written after the conference with Cajetan, uses the words " nam exemplar BREVIS petenti denegabat" Dominus Legatus. It is easy enough to understand why the legate, who was affecting to treat Luther with the greatest kindness, should not choose to show him a BRIEF, in which it appeared, that, at that very moment, he stood condemned as a heretic at Rome, though he had never been heard. On a view of all the circumstances, it seems by no means improbable, that the cardinal, pursuant to his instructions, was intending to make the poor heretic a prisoner, notwithstanding the emperor's promise of safe conduct. But a sight of the BRIEF could not have failed to alarm and put on his guard any man in so critical a situation.

above the church, and even above the scriptures themselves. To this Luther opposed the appeal of the university of Paris, whose reputation had always stood high, as the parent of science, and the defender of the purest christianity. Cajetan, in a rage, declared that the Parisians would meet with due punishment; and that Gerson,* whose writings Luther had quoted, was DAMNED together with all his followers. So extravagantly high were the ideas of papal power conceived by this cardinal, that even the very moderate contradiction, given in France to the pontiff, appeared in his eyes an unpardonable sin. Little did he then imagine how much more openly his magnificent lord and master was to be opposed within the short space of a few months.

Frowns and menaces were by no means adapted to intimidate the determined mind of the Saxon reformer. He continued to insist on the authority of scripture. He owned he might have erred, but he thought it reasonable that his errors should be pointed out, on SCRIPTURAL grounds, before he should be required to retract.

When Luther found, that not the smallest progress was made by conversation with the cardinal, and that all his fine promises of kind treatment amounted precisely to this, "you must either recant, or suffer punishment," he wisely determined to commit his answers to writing. In so doing, says he, the oppressed find comfort in two ways: in the first place, what is written, may be submitted to the judgment of others; and in the second, one has a better opportunity of working upon the fears and the conscience of an arrogant despot, who would otherwise overpower one by his imperious language.†

Agreeably to this resolution, he appeared before the cardinal with a notary and witnesses, repeated his pro-

* The reader will remember, that this celebrated chancellor of the university of Paris, maintained, at the council of Constance, the superiority of a general council over the pope.

† Luther's letters to Fred.

testations of general obedience to the church, and his perfect readiness to recant any error of which he could be convicted. Cajetan replied with so much acrimony, that the accused monk had no opportunity of explaining or of vindicating his sentiments. He absolutely refused to dispute with Luther either in public, or in private; he would not even consent that a single word of his own answers should be put down in writing. He continued to press for a recantation.

Staupitius, who was present at the scene, and who hitherto had acted the part of a steady friend of Luther, rose up, and intreated the legate to permit the accused to return his answers at length in writing. To which request, he, with great difficulty, at last acceded.

At the next conference, Luther exhibited his written explanation and defence, which the cardinal treated with the greatest contempt. He told him, he had filled his paper with passages of scripture, which were irrelevant, and in general, that his answers were those of a perfect idiot. He condescended, however, to say, he would send them to Rome. Lastly, he ordered Luther to depart, and to come no more into his sight, unless he was disposed to recant.

Notwithstanding this rough treatment, it was Luther's firm opinion, that it would have given the cardinal great pleasure to have heard him recant. It may be thought some confirmation of this sentiment, that, in the evening of the very day in which this last conference took place, he sent for the vicar general Staupitius, and desired him to persuade his young monk to retract. Staupitius promised to do his utmost. "You must answer his scriptural arguments," said Cajetan. Staupitius replied ingenuously, "That is above my power. I am his inferior both in capacity and in knowledge of the scriptures."

Throughout this whole conference at Augsburg, cardinal Cajetan appears to have been conscious how ill qualified he was to enter the lists with Luther, as a disputant in theological questions. Indeed the doctrines of the gospel, as far as we can judge, gave him little

concern. His anxiety was, how he might best insure obedience to the pontifical mandates. He inquired not whether these mandates were reasonable or repugnant to scripture, it was sufficient for him to know that they were the dictates of a pope. The decretal of pope Clement VI., which he urged with so much heat and positiveness against Luther in the dispute respecting indulgences, maintained that, "one drop of Christ's blood being sufficient to redeem the whole human race, the remaining quantity, that was shed in the garden and upon the cross, was left as a legacy to the church; to be A TREASURE FROM WHENCE INDULGENCES were to be drawn and administered by the Roman pontiffs."* The augustin monk had, for some time past, been too much enlightened to digest such wild superstitious inventions; and the man, who could call upon him, upon these grounds, to renounce his errors, was not to be reasoned with. Still it required extraordinary courage to deliver in a formal protest against the belief of tenets, which at that time were both established by the highest authority, and also supposed to have been dictated by an infallible judgment.

Some objections were made to Luther's ideas of justification by faith; but Cajetan did not scruple to confess, that, if he would but have retracted his opposition to the indulgences, all other differences might have been composed in an amicable manner; and that his opinions concerning the efficacy of faith in justification and in the sacrament admitted of being modified and interpreted, so as to be inoffensive. When Staupitius was informed of this circumstance, he expressed a wish, that the cardinal had avowed that sentiment in the presence of the notary and the witnesses; because then, said he, there would have been clear proof that, at Rome, MONEY was held in greater estimation than FAITH.

Luther, on the contrary, considered the scripture doctrine of justification by faith as of infinite impor-

* Maclaine in Mosheim, vol. ii. chap. ii.

tance. He declared, that he would rather retract every thing which he had said, upon other subjects, than THAT which he must adhere to with his dying breath. That in regard to indulgences, their intrinsic nature, whatever it might be, could not be altered by ostentatious praises and honours, but that if he gave up the article of justification by faith, he should, in fact, deny Jesus Christ himself. That, though the cardinal had promised to conduct the inquiry according to the sacred scriptures, and the rules of the church, he had not produced a single text of scripture against him, nor any one authority from the holy fathers. Lastly, that he was confident no answer could ever be given to the scriptural arguments and the authorities, which he had produced in support of the doctrine in question.* Our peace, says he, consists in coming to Christ in lively faith. If a man believe not the promise, he may practise confession to all the world, and he may be absolved a thousand thousand times even by the pope himself, but he will never obtain, on good grounds, a quiet conscience.†

It was on Friday the fourteenth of October 1518, that Luther made his last appearance before the pope's legate. A report was spread that, notwithstanding the engagement of a safe conduct, he was to be seized and confined in irons. He remained, however, at Augsburg till the succeeding Monday. He heard nothing from the cardinal. How great must have been his anxiety! On the Monday, by a letter couched in the most respectful terms, he begged pardon for any irreverent or unbecoming language towards the pontiff, which might have escaped him in the heat and hurry of the debate; he even promised to desist from treating the subject of indulgences any more, provided his antagonists were enjoined to observe a similar silence. But to retract his sentiment or give up the truth, he absolutely refused. He said, his conscience would not permit him to act in that manner. He acknowledged,

* Epist. ad Fred. † Resolut. de Indulg.

that his friends, and especially his vicar general, had taken great pains to make him think humbly, submit his own opinion, and form a right judgment: But, said he, neither the favour nor the advice, nor the command of any man ought ever to make me do or say what is contrary to my conscience. To this letter he received no answer.

On the next day he sent another letter to Cajetan, expressed in more spirited language and nearer to his usual strain. " He conceived he had done every thing which became an obedient son of the church. He had undertaken a long and dangerous journey; he was a man of a weak body, and had very little money to spend. He had laid the book, which contained his opinions, at the feet of his holiness the pope; he had appeared before his most reverend father the cardinal; and he was now waiting to be instructed how far he was right in his opinions, and how far wrong. It could no longer serve any good purpose to spend his time there, and be a burden to his friends. He was really in want of money. Besides, the cardinal had told him, vivâ você, to come no more into his sight, unless he would recant;" and said Luther, " in my former letter I have distinctly pointed out all the recantation I can possibly make." He then signified his positive determination to leave the place; but not before he had formally appealed from the pope's legate, nay from the pope himself " ill informed to the same most holy Leo X. that he might be better informed." In prosecuting this appeal he confessed that he acted rather from the judgment of some persons of distinction than from his own. If he had been left entirely to himself, he should have thought an appeal unnecessary in this case. He wished to refer every thing to the determination of the church. What could he do more? He was not a contentious adversary, but a tractable scholar. Even the elector Frederic, he knew, would be better pleased with his appeal than his recantation. He therefore besought the cardinal to consider both his departure and his appeal as the effect of necessity and of the authority of his friends. They said, WHAT will you retract? Is YOUR

retractation to be the rule of OUR FAITH? If any thing, which you have advanced, is to be condemned, let the church decide and do you obey. This reasoning, in his mind was irresistible.

Luther waited four whole days, reckoning from the day of his dismission by the cardinal, and still received no further orders. The suspense was extremely afflicting; and both himself and his friends began to suspect that this TOTAL SILENCE portended violence to his person. To prevent being seized and imprisoned, he quitted Augsburg very early in the morning of the nineteenth* of October, 1518. A friendly senator ordered the gates of the city to be opened, and he mounted a horse, which Staupitius had procured for him. He had neither boots nor spurs, nor sword; and he was so fatigued with that day's journey, that when he descended from his horse, he was not able to stand, but fell down instantly among the straw in the stable.† He had, however, taken care before his departure, that every thing relative to his appeal, should be done in a proper manner and in the presence of a notary public.

Such was the conclusion oft he conferences at Augsburg, in which the firmness and plain dealing of Luther was no less conspicuous than the unreasonable and imperious behaviour of the cardinal.

Whatever might be the cause of that SILENCE for several days, on the part of Cajetan, which our reformer and his friends beheld with so much just suspicion and jealousy; whether the legate still hoped to bring the affair to a happy termination by the milder methods of influence and persuasion; or whether his ambiguous conduct is best explained on the supposition that he was intending to seize the person of Lu-

* Some historians say, this happened on the 20th of October, others on the 18th, but I think Luther's own account of the proceedings at Augsburg show that he must have left that city on the 19th. It is unnecessary to trouble the reader further respecting a matter of so little consequence.

† Tom. i. Altemb. p. 150.

Paul Sarpi says, what is not at all improbable, that Luther had John Huss's case in his head.

ther, but did not dare to proceed to extremities, in defiance of the imperial grant of safe conduct, without further orders from the Roman see; on almost every imaginable view of his motives, it seems natural to conclude that he must have been much mortified at the sudden departure of Luther. He had neither punished the heretic nor reduced him to submission. The court of Rome would probably be highly displeased when they heard of his escape; and, in their disappointment, would be apt to forget the difficult circumstances under which the cardinal acted, and to attribute both the present and the consequent mischiefs to his bad management. In fact, as soon as the events at Augsburg were known at Rome, the pope's legate was blamed exceedingly for his severe and illiberal treatment of Luther at the very moment, it was said, when he ought to have promised him great riches, a bishopric, or even a cardinal's hat.*

Cajetan, no doubt, understood the disposition of the court of Rome sufficiently to foresee how harsh a construction would be put upon his conduct in a business, which had terminated so unfavourably to their wishes and expectations. In the bitterness of his heart he complained to the elector of Saxony of Luther's insolent and insincere behaviour; and even reproached his highness for supporting such a character. He said, that he had conversed for many hours privately with Staupitius, and one or two more learned friends respecting this business; that his object had been to preserve the dignity of the apostolic see without disgracing BROTHER MARTIN, and that when he had put matters into such a train, as to have reasonable hopes of the success of his plan, he had found himself completely deluded. Martin, his several associates, and his vicar general, had suddenly disappeared. Martin, indeed had written letters, in which he pretended to beg pardon, but he had retracted not one word of the scandalous language he had used. Lastly, Cajetan

* Father Paul.

warned the prince to consider, how much he was bound in honour and conscience, either to send brother Martin to Rome or to banish him from his dominions. As to himself, he said, he had washed his hands of so pestilential a business, but his highness might be assured the cause would go on at Rome. It was too important to be passed over in silence;* and he intreated him not to sully the glory of himself and his illustrious house for the sake of a paltry mendicant monk.

Every pious reader will lament the effect which these turbulent and contentious scenes produced upon the mind of the venerable Staupitius. It should seem, that partly an apprehension of danger, and partly his private conversation with cardinal Cajetan, influenced this good man to leave his friend, withdraw all further opposition to the popedom, and retire to Saltzburg. Our more determined and adventurous reformer did not hesitate to tell him, that "he stuck fast between Christ and the pope."† Let us hope, however, that this judgment of Luther was of the harsher sort; and that, in passing it, sufficient allowances were not made for the different tempers and ages of men and for inveterate habits.

Two reasons induce me to conclude with certainty that Staupitius acted towards Luther with perfect faithfulness at Augsburg. First, it is beyond all dispute, that he affronted Cajetan by leaving that place suddenly and without taking leave; which he would never have done, if he had betrayed his friend by dishonorably entering into any plans for seizing his person. Secondly, by way of encouraging the persecuted monk in his difficult circumstances he used this language to him, "Remember, my brother, you undertook this business in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Luther himself, three years afterwards, owned these precious words "sunk deep into his mind." The truth is, this reverend vicar general was a man

* Luth. Op. vol. i. The letter is dated Oct. 25, 1518.
† Lib. i. ep.

of a timid temper, and well advanced in years; also his views of the gospel were far from being bright or distinct; and lastly the prospect of peace with the hierarchy, at least at Wittemberg, was extremely gloomy.

Moreover, we cannot doubt but the pope's legate, in his private conversation with Staupitius, would use both conciliatory and threatening language. Each would tend to shake the resolution of such a man. And besides the direct and immediate effect of that conversation on the mind of the timorous vicar general, we may fairly trace some other important consequences to the same origin. While he was agitated with the discussion, and perhaps yielding to the legate's menaces and advice, he exhorted his less pliable monk to exhibit to his superiors some plainer marks of obedience and humility. The firm temper of Luther, which had resisted the imperious dictates of a haughty cardinal, instantly relented under the intreaties of a mild and affectionate friend. Hence that submissive letter, which our reformer wrote to Cajetan* on Monday the seventeenth of October; and hence those apologies and concessions which are contained in it, to the very limit of what his conscience would permit. Probably no part of his own conduct, on a review of the proceedings at Augsburg, would afford him less satisfaction than this; and though Luther never reproached Staupitius for having recommended so extremely injudicious and suppliant a measure, yet the latter might possibly observe in the former some dissatisfaction on that account; and, at any rate, he could not fail to be convinced from many circumstances, that his own disposition was not calculated, like that of his friend, to encounter such difficulties and hazards as were likely to arise in a righteous and determined opposition to the popedom. These considerations may help further to explain, why it might not be disagreeable to Staupitius to remove from

* Page 320.

Wittemberg, and thereby avoid the dangerous fellowship, and importunities of a man who, in his opinion, was apt to be impetuous and turbulent in his public conduct.

But perhaps the circumstance, which may be thought most unfavourable to the reputation of Staupitius, is, that, in the year 1523, we find him preferred to an abbacy at Saltsburg. Luther's affectionate regard and veneration for his vicar general, restrained him from saying any thing harsh or severe on this occasion, but he could not dissemble his doubts and anxieties respecting the consequences of this preferment. We will conclude this chapter with two valuable extracts of his letters. The first is dated 1522, and is in answer to a letter received from Staupitius at a time, when Luther had heard an unfounded rumor that his friend was actually made an abbot.

"The report of your being made an abbot is so general, that if I had not received your own letter in contradiction, I must have been compelled to believe it. It is, I suppose, in the same way that you receive UNTRUTHS concerning me. May the providence of God attend you! but, I confess my plain understanding does not point out to me, how it can be advisable for you to accept an abbacy at this time. I would not, however, interfere with your judgment. One thing I intreat you, by the bowels of Christ, not readily to believe those who calumniate me. In regard to what you inform me, that my doctrines are the delight of debauchees, and that many scandalous practices have been the consequence of my recent publications, I am neither afraid of such censorious representations, nor surprised to hear of them. Certainly I have laboured, and am labouring, that the pure WORD of God may be spread abroad without tumult. But you know that I am not master of events. My object has been to attack, by means of the written WORD, that system of impieties, which hath been introduced in opposition to sound doctrine. The abominations, my father, the abominations of the pope with his whole kingdom

must be destroyed. And the Lord does this without hand,* by the WORD alone. The subject exceeds all human comprehension; and therefore we need not wonder that great commotions, scandals, and even prodigies should arise. Let not these things disturb you, my father. I cherish the best hopes. The counsel and the stretched out arm of God is plain in this matter. Remember how my cause, from the very first, gave the highest offence to the world, and yet it hath continually prevailed. Satan feels his wound: hence he rages the more, and endeavours to throw all into confusion."

The second letter, dated 1523, is addressed to the reverend abbot of St. Peter's in Saltsburg.

" Reverend father, your silence is unkind. But though I cease to find favour in your eyes, I ought never to forget YOU, through whose means, the light of the gospel first dawned in my heart. I must tell you the truth. It would have been more agreeable to me, if you had not been appointed an abbot; but since it is so, let neither of us interfere with our respective rights of private judgment. Your best friends are sorry for your leaving us, but still much more sorry that you are so near the infamous cardinal Langius, and that you will be compelled to bear in silence all his outrageous behaviour. I shall wonder if you are not in danger of denying Christ.....We still hope the best of you, though your long silence disheartens us. If you are become another man, (which may Christ forbid!) I speak plainly, I shall throw away no more words, but have recourse to prayer, that God may be pleased to show mercy upon you, and us all. You observe, reverend father, how doubtfully I express myself. The reason is, your long silence leaves us ignorant of the disposition of your mind; whereas you very well know our most secret thoughts and wishes. Permit me however to speak positively on one point. We are confident, that we are not really objects of your contempt, even though you should dislike all our

* Dan. viii. 25.

proceedings. I shall not cease to pray that you may be as much estranged from the popedom, as I am at this moment, and indeed as you were formerly. May the Lord hear me, and take you and us to himself."

These letters may deserve the reader's diligent consideration. They throw light on the general character both of the writer and of his friend: they intimate an evident progress of knowledge, in Luther's mind, respecting the nature of the papacy, which took place between the years 1518, and 1523: they manifest the strength of divine grace, which enabled him to withstand that threatening storm which alarmed Staupitius, and drove him into a dishonourable shelter; and lastly, they compel the mind to entertain painful fears and conjectures respecting the perfect uprightness of the new abbot of Saltsburg, however we may be inclined to indulge cheerful hopes, that at the last day he will be found not to have gone the length of actually denying his Lord and Master.

Staupitius enjoyed his abbacy only for a very short time. He died in the year 1524.

CHAP. IV.

The Controversy continued. The Attempts of Miltitz and of Eckius.

THE condition of Luther after his return to Wittemberg, was peculiarly afflictive. Before himself he saw the total ruin of his worldly circumstances, the hardships of poverty and of exile, and the fear of a violent death from papal vengeance. He was not without hope of the protection of the elector, partly from the well known justice and humanity of that prince's character, and partly from the good offices of his secretary Spalatinus. Moreover, as yet, the interference of Frederic in the ecclesiastical controversy had not

only been firm and discreet, but also as spirited and friendly, as could reasonably be expected in behalf of one who was looked on by the hierarchy as a turbulent and an abandoned heretic. Still it behooved our reformer not to be over confident in his expectations of future support. He had abundant cause to be thankful for the past exertions of his prince, which had been found so useful and effective; but trying times were coming on apace. Every day the contest grew more and more perilous. Luther himself had a single eye to the prosperity of the kingdom of Christ; but he could not be answerable for the zeal or the perseverance of others: he was well acquainted with the human heart; and he foresaw that political and secular concerns might clash with the interests of the gospel. He would not wonder if the love of many began to wax cold;* even his much esteemed friend Staupitius had already quitted Saxony; and, though the elector had hitherto manfully defended him against the tyrannical machinations of the court of Rome, it might well be doubted whether the chief motives of this magnanimous conduct were a regard for the honour of God and the religion of Jesus.†

It was an excellent part of Luther's character, that in the most critical and difficult situations he could commit his cause to the God, whom he served, with firm and entire reliance on HIS WILL; and at the

* Matth. 12.

† Some account of the religious character of the elector was given in page 280 of this volume. Seckendorf doubts whether his principal reason for supporting Luther, who was then the public teacher of divinity and philosophy in the university of Wittemberg, might not be the ardent desire which that prince always showed for the prosperity of his favourite seminary of learning. Be this as it may, it is certain, that even before the conferences at Augsburg, in a letter to cardinal Raphael, he expressed himself with great coolness and indifference respecting the DOCTRINES of Luther. "I have never," says he, "taken upon me to defend either the writings or the sermons of Dr. Martin L., and I proved the same, which I now assert, both to Cajetan the pope's legate, and to Miltitz his nuncio." Some authors consider this, as a confession on the part of Frederic, that he had not so much as read a line of Luther's publications, or heard him deliver his sermons. others suppose that, in his concerns with the papal agents, he might dissemble his regard for the reformer, with a view of supporting him and his cause more effectually in the end. Luth. Op. Witt. vol. i. p. 228.

same time be as active and indefatigable in using all prudential means, as if the events depended solely on human exertions. In his present danger and perplexity, he cast his eyes on France, where formerly some opposition had been made to the fulness of papal domination; and where he hoped that he might profess and preach divine truth with greater security than in Germany. "Not," said he, in a letter to Spalatinus, "that I care much on my own account; for in fact, I am concerned, that I should not be thought worthy to suffer for the truth; especially, as by going to Augsburg, I exposed myself to many dangers, and almost tempted God to bring evil upon me. It grieves me, however, to see the fair prospect of our rising seminary thus suddenly clouded; and the studies of the young men at Wittemberg, who are wonderfully zealous for the acquisition of sacred literature, blasted in the bud." In another letter to the same friend, he said, "Every day I expect from Rome the arrival of the ecclesiastical anathemas; and I am, therefore, disposing my affairs in such a manner, that when those curses shall arrive, I may be ready, like Abraham, to depart, not knowing whither. Yet, in another sense, I do know whither I shall go, for God is every where. However I leave with you this farewel letter. See that you have the courage to read the letter of a man excommunicated and accursed!" In a third letter he declared, he was ready either to go or stay. "Some friends," said he, "advise me to deliver myself up to the elector, who will protect me in some safe place and at the same time inform the pope's legate, that my person is under confinement, and that I am ready to give answers to such questions as shall be proposed to me. I commit this plan to your prudence. I am in the hands of God and of my friends. It vexes me to think, that it should be so commonly believed, that the prince in secret supports me. This report, if any thing can, will drive me hence, that I may not involve him in my dangers. To be brief, while I remain here, my liberty both of writing and of speaking is very

much restrained; whereas if I leave Germany, I will open my heart to the world, and offer up my life freely in the service of Christ."

Those who have most considered, how great a trial to a thoughtful mind, a state of suspense is in dangerous and critical seasons, will form the best judgment of Luther's situation towards the end of the year 1518. The foregoing extracts lay open his secret feelings and resolutions, at the same time that they also exhibit his extraordinary faith, patience, and resignation.

In this conjuncture, the elector of Saxony signified his earnest wish that Luther would not leave Wittemberg.* This spirited resolution is to be ascribed, partly to the interference and supplication of the university of that place in behalf of their beloved professor, and partly to the imperious and threatening language of cardinal Cajetan.† Frederic with a calmness and dignity, suitable to his character, declared that he could not expel Luther from Wittemberg, without doing much injury to his university, and further that he should not consider him as an heretic till he had been heard and was convicted. Animated with this favourable determination of the prince, the professor of theology resolved to remain on the spot; and, in a discourse from the pulpit, he requested the people, in case his person should at length become the victim of papal severity, not to harbour the least illwill against the pope or any human being whatever, but to commit the cause to God.

It will be proper to mention here, that besides the literary and controversial employments of the professor at Wittemberg, he had for some time discharged the office of pastor of the same town, as the substitute of Simon Heinsius, the ordinary minister, who then laboured under bodily infirmities; and thus this industrious reformer supported at once the character of a theological teacher and disputant, and also of a popular preacher and a parochial clergyman.

* Melch. Adam. † Page 323—4.

Luther, desirous of anticipating the papal bull, which he daily expected, renewed his appeal to the pope BETTER INFORMED, or in failure of this, to a general council. Fifteen days after, Leo issued a bull, in which, without mentioning the name of Luther, he confirmed the doctrine of indulgences in the most absolute manner. By this step no less improvident than impious, he put it out of the power of the friends of the papacy, to vindicate or even to extenuate its conduct. The grossest venality and contempt of true piety and salutary discipline had prevailed in Germany through the sale of indulgences. To maintain the rectitude of the practice, without the least correction of excesses, at a time when the memory of the transactions was recent, prevented every attempt that might be made to reconcile Luther to the hierarchy. The providence of God was admirable in thus barring up his return to the church of Rome, while, as yet, he was far from being convinced of the totally antichristian state of the popedom.

But the mercenary prostitution of indulgences had not been confined to Germany. In the summer of this same year 1518, Samson a franciscan of Milan, came to Zurich, to prosecute the scandalous traffic. There he was opposed by Huldric Zuinglius, afterwards the famous Swiss reformer.* In the month of September, Samson came to Zug, where a servant seeing the people press in crouds, addressed them: "Be not so importunate, I beseech you; let† those enter first, who are furnished with money; care shall be taken afterwards of the poor." At Bern, the enormities exceeded, if possible, those which had been practised in Germany. When the sale of the indulgences was over, BAPTISMAL INNOCENCE was restored to all present, who should confess their sins, and thrice recite the Lord's prayer and the angelic salutation. Those also, who thrice went round the great church daily repeating prayers, might free what souls they pleased from pur-

* Father Paul, b. i. p. 3. † Page 60. Seckendorf. Hottinger.

gatory. Still grosser corruptions than these were practised. But the infatuation of the hierarchy was incurable. Evangelical light and liberty were fast advancing to the relief both of Germany and Switzerland, yet the rulers of the church shut their eyes, and hardened their hearts. Scarcely roused from a state of shameful sloth and sensuality, they seem to have instantly fallen into the opposite extreme of blind presumption and impetuous rage. Pride, rashness, and a most tyrannical ambition appeared in all their counsels.

During the whole progress of the reformation, the pious reader has to admire the providential circumstances, which, both in succession and in concurrence, favoured the happy deliverance of the nations from papal captivity. We have just seen how the late haughty conduct of Cajetan tended to fix the mind of Frederic more steadily in the interests of the reformer; and this was a consequence which proved extremely influential upon the subsequent events. Immediately this WISE prince solicited the emperor to exert all his authority at Rome, that the present ecclesiastical controversy might be settled in Germany by impartial judges. What would have been the ultimate effect of this prudent step, we are unable to say. Maximilian died in the beginning of the year 1519; and during the INTERREGNUM, the prince elector, duke of Saxony, as vicar of the empire, possessed sufficient power to protect and cherish lutheranism in its infancy. "The violent tempest," says Luther, "subsided by little and little; and the pontifical thunders of excommunication were gradually more and more despised."* The resolutions of Frederic were not a little confirmed by a letter which he received in the spring of 1519, from the learned Erasmus. Brevity does not permit me to present the reader with this elegant composition in which the writer manages his subject with wonderful address, dexterity, and politeness. By the following answer, however, a judgment may be formed both of

* Luth. Op. præf.

the matter contained in it, and also of the effect it produced on the mind of the prince.

The elector, duke of Saxony, to Erasmus. "It gives me the greatest satisfaction to be informed by you, that lutheranism is not disapproved by the learned, and that the writings of doctor Martin are read with the greatest avidity. He is a person almost unanimously admired, at home and abroad, both for the integrity of his life and for his solid erudition. That he has remained hitherto in Saxony under our protection is, indeed, owing rather to the just cause he defends than to the man himself.

"Nothing can be more contrary to our principles than to suffer a man, who has deserved reward, to be oppressed and punished: nor with the help of Almighty God will we ever allow an innocent person to become a victim to the selfish malice of the wicked."

The court of Rome, finding it impossible to stop the proceedings of Luther by mere authority and threatening, had now recourse to the arts of negotiation. The haughty pontiff had become sensible of his imprudence in having entrusted the management of the controversy to such a commissioner as Cajetan; but we shall soon see, that still he had learnt no lessons of true wisdom and moderation from what happened at Augsburg. He condescended indeed to employ a person of a different stamp; one, who by his insinuating manners and gentle treatment of the reformer, raised considerable expectations of at least a temporary peace; but happily for the reformation, this judicious and temperate policy was presently succeeded by measures most unaccountably imprudent and disgusting. This new legate was Charles Miltitz, a Saxon knight, who, as a lay character, might be supposed less under the dominion of party and prejudice than the dominican cardinal, his predecessor. He was commissioned to present to the elector Frederic the golden consecrated ROSE;* and, if possible, to put

* This used to be considered as a peculiar mark of the pope's favour and esteem.

an end to all the ecclesiastical disputes which had produced the rupture between Luther and the Roman see. Frederic had formerly solicited the favour of the ROSE with much earnestness; but on this occasion, he is said to have received it with a cool and almost contemptuous politeness; and in no wise could he be induced to change his measures respecting his favourite professor of Wittemberg.

Miltitz, thus foiled in his attempts to influence the mind of the prince elector, repaired to Leipsic; and there finding Tetzel, he twice rebuked him with the greatest severity before his own provincial* on account of his iniquitous practices in the business of indulgences. It appears from Miltitz's own letters that, as he passed through Germany, he had obtained perfect intelligence of the frauds and private vices of Tetzel; and probably he was the more desirous of exposing them, because, by abandoning that audacious dominican, he imagined he should at once gratify the advocates for reformation, and shelter the Roman pontiff from censure. With Luther himself the new legate had several conferences which proved fruitless, as to the essential points: and the only effect of these negotiations in the former part of 1519, seems to have been, that the electors of Saxony and of Treves agreed to defer the complete examination of the matters in dispute to the first German diet of the new emperor Charles V.; and that, in the mean time, Luther should write a submissive letter to the pope. To this our reformer readily consented, for he was by no means disposed to break with the pontiff; and it is not improbable he would have continued an obedient subject of the Roman see all his days, if he might have been permitted, without molestation, to discharge the office of a faithful pastor of Christ. The learned translator† of Mosheim, seems out of humor with him for having made "weak submissions" on this occasion; and yet he owns that, "properly speaking, there was no

* Seck. p. 62. † Mosh. vol. ii. chap. ii. sect. ix.

retractation of his former tenets, nor the smallest degree of respect shown to the infamous traffic of indulgences." If so, every judicious protestant, though he may entirely agree with this excellent writer, that Luther's "views were not, as yet, very extensive, his former prejudices entirely dispelled, or his reforming principles steadily fixed,"* may nevertheless maintain that his submissive conduct at this time, taken with all the circumstances which accompanied it, indicated STRENGTH of mind, not weakness, and a spirit of discrimination rather than of blind acquiescence. We ought not to judge of this great man by the feelings and habits of protestants of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

His inimical historian Maimbourg† says, "his letter to the pope was rather civil than humble, but that it contained nothing to the purpose." Let the reader judge from the following concise account of it, whether Luther, according to the light which he then possessed, did not take effectual care not to entangle his conscience by any improper concessions.

He said, it was a great grief to him to find himself accused of want of respect to the church of Rome: that his design in all he had done was to maintain the honour of that church; and that, as his writings were now spread throughout all Germany, he could not retract his assertions without dishonouring the said church: that the persons who really injured the holy see were the very preachers whom he had opposed: they disgraced their sacred office by the most absurd discourses, and by seeking only to gratify their avarice under the protection of his holiness. Lastly, he declared, that he was ready to observe silence in future respecting indulgences, provided his adversaries would also forbear their provocations. In concluding he solemnly protested, that all along he had aimed at nothing but to prevent the mother church from being polluted by the vile imputation of avarice, and the

* Id. † Sect. 24.

people from being seduced by a false notion that the indulgences were preferable to truly benevolent actions.*

Of his personal conferences with Miltitz, the following compressed account is extracted from his own letters and from the Latin edition of his works. "Charles Miltitz saw me at Altenburg, and complained, that I had united the whole world to myself, and drawn it aside from the pope; that he had discovered this at the inns, as he travelled. "Martin," said he, "I took you for some solitary old theologian; whereas I find you a person in all the vigour of life. Then you are so much favoured with the popular opinion, that I could not expect, with the help of twenty-five thousand soldiers, to force you with me to Rome." After this flattery, he intreated me to consult for pacific measures, and promised, that he would endeavour that the pope should do the same. We supped together, and I was treated with the greatest courtesy. I conducted myself in such a manner as if I had not seen through these Italian arts.† I could only promise, that I would do all, which I could do consistently with truth and a good conscience; that I also loved peace, and was driven into these broils by mere necessity. This Charles Miltitz was esteemed a frivolous character, and his advice was frivolous; nevertheless it is my judgment, that if the friends of the papacy and the pope himself had treated me in this manner at first, matters would never have come to so great a rupture. Instead of that, the pope condemned me unheard, and raged with his BULLS; and the crafty archbishop of Mentz became the dupe of his own cunning. All the blame is at his door; for, his sole object in suppressing my doctrine, was to save his own part of the money, which should be collected by the indulgences. But now all the papal plans and attempts are to no purpose. The Lord hath awaked and stands to judge the people; and though they slay us, they will not gain their point."

* Luth. Op. vol. i. Du Pin, cent. 16. † Italitates.

Luther was always distinguished by a spirit of respect and obedience towards his superiors, whether in church or state. In this negotiation with Miltitz, and also in his letter to the pope, we discern much of this spirit, joined to great tenderness of conscience and an amiable sensibility of temper on account of the humane treatment he had received. Keep in view, that, as yet, he apprehended the papal power to have just foundations, however it might have been abused; keep in view his own description of his feelings,* penned in moments of the greatest deliberation, and long after the turbulent scenes were passed; keep in view the state of the rest of mankind in christendom, and you will acknowledge the Saxon reformer to have exhibited a rare example of courage and firmness in these memorable transactions. In proposing a compromise of silence on both sides on the affair of indulgences, he may be thought to have acted inconsistently with his former declarations, and to have conceded too much to the hierarchy; but the answer is, he had already manfully resisted the Roman see in that abominable traffic; and he began to hesitate how far it was HIS proper business to proceed further in a matter of that sort. In a word, his conscience was at present puzzled respecting the EXTENT of the obedience which he owed to the rulers whose authority he then allowed. Harassed with doubts, and perfectly aware of the danger that threatened him, he would have given the world for a sound and discreet counsellor: of the danger he sought no partner: but alas, his best and wisest friends, when pressed closely concerning the most critical and perilous part of the contest, absolutely stood aloof.† After long and diligent reflection on the best authenticated facts, and the peculiar situation of Luther, the very doubts which arose in his mind, appear to me, I con-

* Pages 305—6

† After he had conferred with Miltitz, he wrote to his friend Spalatinus; and he also particularly entreated the elector Frederic, that, for the sake of Almighty God, he would use so much clemency towards him, as freely to say, what he wished him to do in the present circumstances. Seck. p. 63.

fess, to imply both extraordinary integrity of principle, and great vigor of intellect.

But whatever were the secret motives of our reformer in making his concessions, Leo X. disdained to accept the submission, and open the door of reconciliation. The serious reader will not think me troublesome in repeatedly drawing his attention to the kind providence of God, which appeared so remarkably in many particulars of the contest before us. While the Roman pontiff, rejecting counsels of peace, was listening to enraged bigots, greedy dominicans, and ambitious cardinals, the inquisitive spirit of the humble professor of Wittemberg, was enabled, by degrees and a constant study of the scriptures, to acquire a practical conviction that the tyranny of the papal hierarchy was no longer to be endured. Luther's letter to the pope was written in the former part of 1519; and by his two letters to Staupitius, we have seen how much better he understood the true principles of the papal system in 1522 and 1523.* It was undoubtedly this gradual insight into the enormities of the popedom, which cooperating with the infatuation of the pontifical advisers in their unaccountable aversion to healing and pacific measures, raised that general spirit of indignation, and of opposition to the established religion, which at length terminated in the blessed reformation.

While the pope's nuncio was negotiating a reconciliation in Germany, Tetzel, the wretched subaltern, whose scandalous conduct had so much disgraced his employers, met with the reward, which frequently awaits the ministers of iniquity. He found himself deserted by all the world.

Miltitz, in particular, had treated him so roughly, that this daring and boisterous instrument of papal avarice and extortion actually fell sick, wasted away, and at last died of a broken heart. A dreadful lesson! This unhappy man left the world, as far as appears,

* Page 326—7.

destitute of comfort in his own soul after he had administered a false peace to thousands! It became necessary for those whom he had served to discard him, and he had no resources in his own conscience. The pontiff's displeasure is said to have affected him exceedingly; but we have no evidence that he searched the word of God in true penitence and humility. A little before his death, Luther, hearing of his anguish of mind, and sympathizing with him in his distress, wrote to him in the most kind and consolatory strains, and begged him not to be distressed with the recollection of any thing that had passed between them.* If the letter had been extant, we should have found in it, I apprehend, instructions concerning repentance, and warm exhortations to lay hold of the promises of the gospel. If the French historians, Maimbourg and Varillas, had been acquainted with this fact, they would hardly, one would think, have represented Luther, as a man of a vindictive, implacable temper.†

About the middle of the year 1519, Erasmus wrote, from Lovain, an epistle to Luther, which proves with what caution and temper that great man had beheld the progress of the contest. He takes care not to appear a partizan of Luther; he speaks of him with a studied ambiguity; commends him so far as he could consistently with his determined purpose not to expose himself to trouble or rebuke, and recommends to him moderation and mildness in his proceedings. In this last point, he certainly deserved the thanks of Luther; let us remember, however, that timid and artful politicians were never employed, to any good purpose, in the service of Jesus Christ.

No man understood better than Erasmus the art of suggesting advice, in nice and difficult cases, without giving offence. The latter part of his letter to Luther runs thus: "In England you have persons of the greatest distinction, who think highly of your

* Luth Op. Wit.

† Maimbourg in Seck. p. 18. Varillas, in eod. p. 22. See also p. 287—8, of this volume.

writings. Here also you have advocates, and among them there is one most excellent character. For my part, I keep clear of all party, with a view to be of as much service as I can to the revival of literature. And I think one does more good by civility and moderation than by violence. In that way Christ has brought mankind under his government: in that way St. Paul abrogated the Jewish ritual. It is better to complain of those who abuse the authority of the pontiffs, than of the pontiffs themselves; and I would make the same remark respecting kings. We may argue as strongly as we can against notions that have long prevailed, but we should never contradict them positively. It is more effectual to treat acrimonious abuse with contempt than to confute it. On every occasion we should guard against arrogant and factious LANGUAGE; nothing can be more opposite to the spirit of christianity. At the same time we should keep a strict watch over our MOTIVES. Anger, hatred, vain glory, lay snares for us, even when we are most piously employed. I do not say these things to you by way of admonition, for you do observe the very rules here recommended. I mention them rather for the purpose of exhorting you to persevere in the same conduct always. Your commentaries on the psalms please me exceedingly; and I hope they will do much good. The prior of the monastery at Antwerp says, he was formerly one of your scholars. He is a man of real primitive christianity, and loves you most cordially. He is almost the only one who preaches Jesus Christ. The rest in general, either aim at lucre, or treat the people with old wives' fables. May the Lord Jesus daily bestow upon you more plentifully HIS OWN SPIRIT for the glory of his name and the public good! Farewel."*

There are many excellent observations interspersed throughout this composition. It is written in Latin, and is a good specimen of that elegant adroitness with

* Ep. Erasm. 427. vol. i.

which the accomplished author always conducted himself in affairs of peculiar delicacy.

But it was not only the wary Erasmus and the timid Staupitius, who shrunk from the dangerous contest with the hierarchy in which Luther was involved, even Spalatinus himself was not a little intimidated by the daring measures of his adventurous friend. Several of the elector's court also were alarmed in a similar way; and thus the Saxon reformer, whose righteous cause was eminently that of mankind in general, and who himself needed encouragement in his perils and anxieties, was called upon to rouse and animate the drooping minds of his best supporters, who began to waver and complain that matters were carried too far. This departure from a steady and consistent conduct in his more enlightened adherents was, no doubt, a trial peculiarly severe and vexatious to Luther. Men expect, from their enemies, reproach, misrepresentation, calumny; they are prepared for these things; they even triumph in them, and are stirred up by them to defence and victory. It is when their friends become tame or treacherous; when they deceive or desert them in critical moments, that the firmest mind, acting on principles merely human, is apt to give way. Conscious of integrity and disinterestedness, and overcome with chagrin and disappointment, a man, in such a case, abandons altogether a dangerous conflict, where his solitary efforts, against a host of adversaries, will prove inevitably abortive. Not so, however, where the cause is that of true religion, and where the gospel of Christ has laid strong hold both of the understanding and the affections. We then look for the operation of other motives besides those of mere human nature. As we then serve a MASTER, who MUST be obeyed, we have promises of help, directions for resignation, and grounds of comfort in the issue of ill success, such as belong to no worldly enterprises whatever. The following extract of a letter to Spalatinus will illustrate these observations.

Luther to Spalatinus,——

" Do not give way to fear too much, my dear Spalatinus; neither teaze your mind by filling it with human imaginations. You know, I must have perished long ago in my various struggles with the supporters of papal abominations, unless Christ had taken care of me and my concerns. Was there a single person, who did not expect that my ruin would have taken place before this time? I assure you, I suppress many things, which, if I were elsewhere, I should freely publish concerning the enormities of Rome. But you must never hope that I shall be free from persecution and danger, unless I were entirely to give up the cause of sound divinity. My friends, if they please, may suppose me beside myself; nevertheless I say, if this contest be really of God, it will not be ended, till TRUTH effectually save itself by its own right hand; not by mine, nor by yours. From the very first I have been expecting matters to come to the situation in which they are at this moment. However I always told you, that I would quit the country, if my residence in Saxony was attended with any danger to the prince."

From this letter, which plainly implies a previous communication from Spalatinus expressive of much apprehension and uneasiness, a judgment may be formed of the sentiments respecting Luther, which probably prevailed at the elector's court in the former part of the year 1519. Spalatinus resided with Frederic in the capacity both of secretary and domestic chaplain; and therefore would take no step of importance without the secret knowledge and approbation of that prince. Luther was perfectly aware of this; and in his letter to his friend, would, no doubt, consider the fears and anxieties, which he was endeavouring to quiet, as, in reality, the fears and anxieties of the elector himself. Hence he wisely repeats his readiness at all times to quit Saxony, if his presence there should be judged injurious to the interests of the prince.

On this occasion, however, neither the elector of Saxony nor his court should be accused of down right insincerity. In the main, they certainly favoured the principles of Luther, and rejoiced in his success; but they disliked any material share of the hazard of the controversy. Hence, they became cold, supine, and irresolute; and hence, their communications, which ought to have furnished spirited counsel and encouragement, dwindled into prudential lessons of caution and remonstrance. Modern protestants should know the extreme disadvantages under which the great CHAMPION of christian liberty laboured in the beginning of the reformation.

The immediate circumstance, which seems to have given the alarm at this time* to the friends of Luther, was the bold declarations of this theologian, in his answers to the positions of Eckius respecting the foundation of the pope's authority. He had written to Spalatinus very explicitly on this subject, but seems not completely to have satisfied his scruples. To call in question the origin of the power of the pope, was to tread tender ground; the nations, as yet, secretly revered his majesty, and dreaded his vengeance; though, in regard to ecclesiastical abuses in general, they had indeed begun to open their eyes and were receiving fresh light apace.

The name of Eckius of Ingolstadt has already been mentioned† among the adversaries of Luther. This able and learned doctor of divinity had formerly been the friend of our reformer; but a thirst of fame and a prospect of worldly advantages seduced him from the cause of TRUTH. The facts we have to produce, indicate but too plainly the motives of Eckius. After his literary defeat in the affair of indulgences, he circulated thirteen propositions, all of them levelled against the heresies of lutheranism. One of these propositions affirmed the grand article of a papist's faith, namely, " That the pontiffs are vicars of Christ, and

* Viz. about the middle of 1519. † Page 300, of this vol.

the successors of St. Peter."* Luther had the sagacity instantly to see through his design; and expressed himself to the following effect. "I never so much as touched upon this subject in any of my dicourses. Eckius now brings it forward to serve several purposes. He thinks, he shall hereby cast an odium upon me, and at the same time flatter the court of Rome, to his own profit, and to the ruin of his brother Martin Luther."

It will here be proper to give a brief account of the famous disputation which was carried on publicly at Leipsic, for many days together in the course of this year.

Eckius, relying on the brilliancy of his own talents and the popularity of his cause, earnestly sought for a public exhibition of theological skill; and, with this view, challenged Carolstadt, the colleague and adherent of Luther, and even Luther himself, to try their strength with him in a contest on the points in dispute. Carolstadt was a doctor of divinity, and archdeacon of Wittemberg, and is esteemed one of the first open defenders of Luther. The challenge was accepted; and George, duke of Saxony, uncle of the elector, offered the combatants the city of Leipsic, as the scene of debate, with an engagement for their security and a promise of every convenience. He was himself a strenuous roman catholic, and he expected that great glory would accrue to the papal cause from the well known abilities and attainments of Eckius. Luther obtained leave to be present at the contest as a spectator, but was expressly denied the grant of a safe conduct, if he attempted to appear in the character of a disputant. The assembly was splendid, the expectations of mankind were strongly fixed; and it was vainly imagined that some decision would be made concerning the objects of contention.

The first subject of debate between Eckius and Carolstadt respected the limits of nature and grace. The

* Propos. Ecc. Luth. Op. vol. i.

latter disputant defended the whole doctrine of Augustin concerning grace, which, Luther observes, Eckius did not oppose by argument, or with any real difference of sentiment, but only in mere words and in appearance. He granted that FREEWILL without grace, could effect nothing but sin. " It avails then," continues Luther, " not to good but to evil. Where then is its liberty? Moreover, every illiterate person, who hears the expression FREEWILL, naturally supposes that it implies man to be equally capable of good and evil; whence he will presume on his own strength, and think that he can convert himself to God. Eckius knows very well the impiety of this notion, yet he supports and spreads it. I too admit that man's will is free in a certain sense; not because it is now in the same state as it was in Paradise, but because it was made free originally, and may, through God's grace, become so again."

Such were the sentiments of Luther on this difficult subject; and, if due allowance be made for the impropriety of the term freewill, his ideas appear sufficiently in harmony with what the most evangelical persons, in all ages, have maintained. The whole controversy was carried on with much clamour and confusion; the Roman party prevailed in popularity at Leipsic; Eckius delivered what he had to say with prodigious animation, and is allowed to have far exceeded Carolstadt in energetic exertions of voice and action. Luther protests in the most solemn manner, that as long as an appeal to books and written documents were admitted, his friend Carolstadt defended himself with a rich variety of apt and excellent quotations; but, says he, " Eckius made a proposal, that all books should be laid aside, and the dispute go on without them; the multitude gave a shout of approbation; and then, I freely own, that Eckius, who had the better memory and a greater flow of words, supported his side of the question in a more plausible manner than his opponent."*

* Seck. 73.

This disputation continued for six days;* during which time, the superior eloquence and acuteness of Eckius seems to have afforded a temporary triumph to the enemies of the reformation. Flushed with success, and thirsting for glory, this champion of the papal system, came to Luther at his lodgings, and, with an air of confidence, said, "I understand you will not dispute with me in public." "How can I dispute with you," said Luther, "when the duke George refuses me my request of a safe conduct." Eckius replied, "If I am not to combat you, I will spend no more time on Carolstadt. It was on YOUR account that I came here. Suppose I could obtain the public faith for your safety, would you then meet me and try your strength."† Luther consented; and very soon after he had the duke's leave to take Carolstadt's place in the public debate.

This second theological conflict was carried on for ten days, with uncommon ardor and without intermission. Among the articles of controversy were the doctrines of purgatory and indulgences, the nature of repentance and remission of sins, and, particularly, the foundation of the supremacy of the Roman pontiffs. It was in this last article of the controversy, that Eckius placed his chief strength and expectation of victory. His numerous audience in general, with the duke of Saxony at their head, favoured the papal cause: long habits of ignorance, superstition, and prejudice, in religious matters, had established the romish doctrines; and the few, who ventured to inquire for reasons of their faith, were deemed impious and accursed, and worthy of expulsion from the community.

Moreover this question concerning the superiority of the Roman see was well contrived to promote the ambitious designs of Eckius in every way. Luther, it was foreseen, must either shun the main point in debate by disgraceful evasions; or, by a direct avowal of his doctrines, expose himself to the charge of open

* From June 27, 1519, to July 4. † Melch. Ad.

heresy. He must either yield the palm of eloquence and of theological skill to his crafty adversary, or he would inevitably furnish such decisive proofs of rebellion against the hierarchy as would insure his own condemnation at the court of Rome. Thus the troublesome innovator was supposed to be entangled in an inextricable dilemma, while the prudent defender of the established religion, looking forward to nothing but conquest and glory, anticipated the praises and honours of the Roman pontiff. Luther, whom we have observed to have been fully sensible in how nice and critical a situation he was placed,* was much hurt by the ungenerous conduct of Eckius in this business, and severely reproached him afterwards on the account.

To the talents and the artifices of the popish advocate, the Saxon reformer, besides his superior abilities and more intimate knowledge of the scriptures, opposed a good conscience, a firm determination to hazard every thing in the cause of TRUTH, and a confident expectation of the blessing of the Almighty. In particular, against Eckius's doctrine of the divine right of the popes, he advanced the following proposition. "All the proofs, which can be produced to show that the church of Rome is superior to other churches, are taken out of insipid decretals of the popes themselves, made within these four hundred years; and against this notion of supremacy, there are passages of the holy scriptures, approved histories for eleven hundred years, and the determinations of the council of Nice."

When Eckius contended, that the expressions "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my church," "And I will give unto thee the keys," evinced the supremacy of St. Peter and his successors, that this was the explanation given by the holy fathers, and that the contrary opinion was among the errors of Wickliff and John Huss; Luther in reply said, that he could produce more passages from the

* Page 345. of this vol. at the top.

fathers in support of his own interpretation of the passages in question than Eckius could of his; but that he had no hesitation to add, that even if all the fathers, without exception, had understood the passages in that sense, he would confute them by the authority of St. Paul, and St. Peter themselves, who say, that Jesus Christ is the only foundation and corner stone of his church. He further observed, that the words, "Thou art Peter,"....if construed strictly, must be confined to the person of Peter, and therefore the authority conveyed by them ceased when that apostle died; and that if their meaning was to be extended to the church and to Peter's successors, no reason could be given, why ALL the apostles and ALL their successors should not be understood to be the successors of Peter. Lastly, he intimated that his adversary had been very unfortunate in appealing to the authority of Cyprian. "If," said Luther, "the learned doctor will agree to stand or fall by the authority of Cyprian, we shall quickly put an end to this controversy. For in the first place, Cyprian never addresses Cornelius, the bishop of Rome, in any other manner than 'My dear brother;' and in the second, he expressly says, that every bishop has a distinct jurisdiction of his own, and that bishops ought not to interfere with each other, but wait for the day of judgment by our Lord Jesus Christ."*

Eckius was so much struck with the reasonings of Luther, and especially with the neat, and well digested order in which his materials were arranged, that he was compelled to acknowledge, before a splendid audience, the "qualifications and attainments of his reverend opponent." He even besought their illustrious and magnificent mightinesses to pardon himself, who was so much occupied with other concerns, if he should not be able to produce such a mass of accurate testimonies as the learned doctor had laid before them.

* Revolut. Lutheri

He came to Leipsic, he said, not to write books, but to dispute.

It will be unnecessary to trouble the protestant reader with a minute detail of a multitude of arguments, which were brought forward in this debate with great warmth, eloquence, and dexterity, on both sides. We shall make a few concise observations on several of the controverted points, and also take notice of some instructive facts and circumstances which are connected with this famous disputation at Leipsic, and then dismiss the subject.

Though Luther judged it impious to maintain the DIVINE RIGHT of the pope in that strict sense, which makes him the successor of St. Peter and vicar of Christ, his extreme reverence for the scriptures, and his tenderness of conscience, disposed him, as yet, to allow the superiority of the Roman see, but on different grounds. It could not be denied that the pontiffs had possessed a decided preeminence from age to age, and therefore, he conceived, it was his duty not to resist "the powers that be." The scriptural argument, which for a long time appeared to his mind in itself unanswerable, was still further strengthened by two powerful reasons. Firstly, the will of God, he thought, might be clearly collected from the facts, independent of scripture. Unless it had been the will of God, the popes could never have attained so great and durable a dominion. Secondly, "The whole body of christians," he said, "own themselves to be under the Roman pontiff: this universal consent is a consideration of the greatest weight: the unity of the church should be preserved in every thing that is not directly contrary to the word of God."*

Intirely agreeable to these sentiments is the declaration of Luther in one of his letters to Spalatinus, who, it should seem, had been directed by the elector of Saxony to admonish him most seriously, in all things to observe a reverential obedience towards the

* Id

pope. "To separate myself," says he, "from the apostolical see of Rome is a thing that has never yet entered my mind."* However his next letter to the same friend intimates a further insight into the essence of popery. "That I may be the better qualified," says he, "for the ensuing debate at Leipsic, I am turning over the decretals of the popes; and I would whisper into your ear, that I begin to entertain doubts, whether the Roman pontiff be not the very antichrist of the scriptures, or his messenger; so wretchedly corrupted by him, in the decretals, are the pure doctrines of Christ."† As long as this new sentiment remained crude and unsettled in the mind of Luther, it certainly behooved him not to act upon it; but it is not difficult to understand how the divulging of so important a secret to Spalatinus must have startled the elector Frederic and his court, who, we have seen, were sufficiently alarmed with the liberties which had already been taken with the pontifical authority.‡

How different were the views and motives of the persons who took part in the affairs of religion, about the time of the public controversy at Leipsic, and some months before! Leo X. was indolent and ill advised; perfectly indifferent in regard to religion and piety; only anxious to advance the opulence, grandeur, and dominion of the Roman see. His ostentatious champion Eckius, on the one hand, flattered and misled his lordly master, who pretended to be infallible; and, on the other, menaced and calumniated the augustin monk, while in reality he was seeking only his own aggrandisement. Frederic the WISE, and some of his court, grieved for several of the reigning abuses, which were obvious and undeniable, but still remained in a wretched bondage, confirmed by long habits of superstitious submission. Though friendly to improvements in religion, they dreaded the rude hand of the Saxon reformer, and were in general too much disposed to bow to the majesty of the pope. Lastly,

* Ep. p. 99. † Ep. p. 100. ‡ See p. 343. of this vol.

Luther was daily approaching, by firm but gradual advances, to that evangelical liberty, of which he became, under God, the principal reviver in Europe. Let these facts and observations be kept in mind, and they will help us to discover, what must have been the feelings of our reformer at Leipsic, while he was disputing with Eckius concerning the pope's supremacy. To have denied the DIVINE RIGHT of the pontifical jurisdiction, according to the fullest, and most extended interpretation of the words, was sufficiently dangerous; but to have dropped the slightest insinuation that the bishop of Rome was actually the antichrist of the new testament, or, that the Roman church was antichristian in principle, would probably have cost him his life.

The more thoroughly we examine the principles of Luther, the more exactly consistent do we find them with his practice, even in the most difficult circumstances. So in the present instance: He seriously believed, that long possession and the consent of the faithful* were solid arguments for the papal supremacy; but some rays of fresh light burst in upon the mind of the honest inquirer at the very time when he was arming for the combat at Leipsic. He was then in no condition either to confirm or to do away his new suspicions of the antichristian character of the popedom. What was to be done? He determined to dismiss those suspicions for the present, till he should have leisure to weigh them; and in the mean time he adhered to the only principle, by which, in his judgment, the duty of obedience to the existing hierarchy could be supported. He dared openly to assert,† that it was far better the Roman pontiffs should, with fear and trembling, see the foundation of their authority in the permission of God and the consent of their subjects, than that, under a notion of DIVINE RIGHT, they should feel themselves secure, depend upon force and terror, and by degrees exercise an odious tyranny.

* Luth. Op. Resol. † Resolut. de pot. Papæ.

This declaration, though it fell greatly short of the creed of a true roman catholic, yet, by containing an actual acknowledgment of the pope's supremacy, manifested a spirit of obedience and reconciliation on the part of the reformer. Nor was it possible for him, without doing the utmost violence to his conscience, to have exhibited a nearer consent to the doctrines of Eckius. There is even some reason to believe that if his friends, namely, the elector of Saxony and his court, had not discovered so excessive an anxiety lest he should offend the pope by disrespectful treatment, he would have conceded less at this time to his opponent, respecting the grand article of roman catholic doctrine; or, at least, would have acted with more reserve on a point where his own faith, though modified and less offensive, was certainly beginning to waver. Before the public disputation at Leipsic, Luther printed and circulated his sentiments on the pope's supremacy, the same in substance as is related in the preceding pages. He took that step, he tells us, because he had great doubts, whether he should be allowed to enter the lists with Eckius as a public disputant. Three times by letters, he says, he put the question to the duke George, but could obtain no answer.* All this is, no doubt, strictly true; yet WHENCE, it is asked, arose the solicitude of Luther to appear, at all and on any principles, as the public defender of pontifical authority; the public defender of an unscriptural opinion, which he was soon going to abandon with abhorrence and detestation; and which, in his private letters, he was already beginning to reprobate in very significant language?

Seckendorf ascribes these conciliatory measures intirely to the fears and remonstrances of the elector Frederic and his court; and thinks that Luther in this instance acted contrary both to his own judgment and his inclination.† To differ from this very judicious and candid memorialist can never be pleasant, and

* Lib. i. ep. † Page 71. Seck.

will, in general, be found unsafe; nevertheless, I cannot but think that, in estimating the motives of the Saxon reformer, his friends as well as his adversaries have, on this and several other occasions, too much overlooked his profound veneration for established authorities. They seem to have scarcely supposed it possible, that a man who was so deeply concerned in the confusions and divisions of the church, should still have been a friend to peace and good order. Whereas, in fact, Luther's spirit of submission to legal establishments is as exemplary and unquestionable, as his courage and resolution in defending christian liberty is truly wonderful and unparalleled. A proper attention to this part of his character will lead the candid inquirer to satisfactory explanations of his conduct in some cases where he has been too hastily accused of inconsistency.*

Luther's own description of his feelings respecting the matters in dispute between Eckius and himself ought not to be omitted here; as it will, doubtless, be preferred to any conjectures either of roman catholics or of protestants, especially by those, who have observed the integrity and the precision with which this faithful servant of God always lays open his mind on serious occasions. My own case, says he, is a notable example of the difficulty with which a man emerges from erroneous notions of long standing. How true is the proverb, custom is a second nature! How true is that saying of Augustin, habit, if not resisted, becomes necessity. I, who, both publicly and privately, had taught divinity with the greatest diligence for seven years, insomuch that I retained in my memory almost every word of my lectures, was in fact at that time only just initiated into the knowledge and faith of

* The reader will not suppose me to insinuate, that Luther's respect for the elector of Saxony and his court had NO WEIGHT in determining him to treat the papal authority in a reverential manner during his controversy with Eckius. On the contrary, I believe it had CONSIDERABLE WEIGHT. But why is the consideration of other motives to be omitted; and particularly of such motives as are known to have been congenial with the man?

Christ; I had only just learnt that a man must be justified and saved, not by works, but by the faith of Christ; and lastly, in regard to pontifical authority, though I publicly maintained that the pope was not the head of the church by a DIVINE RIGHT, yet I stumbled at the very next step, namely, that the whole papal system was a satanic invention. This I did not see, but contended obstinately for the pope's RIGHT, FOUNDED ON HUMAN REASONS; so thoroughly deluded was I, by the example of others, by the title of HOLY CHURCH, and by my own habits. Hence I have learnt to have more candour for bigoted papists, especially if they are not much acquainted with sacred or, perhaps, even with profane history.*

The victory in the theological contest at Leipsic, as might have been expected, was claimed by both sides. But, instead of repeating many contradictory and positive assertions, that have originated in prejudice and party zeal, it will be better to mention several undeniable facts, which may assist the judgment in discovering what were the real sentiments of mankind at the time of this transaction, so celebrated in ecclesiastical history.

1. George, the duke of Saxony, who, on all occasions, was warmly attached to the papal interests, invited the disputants, after the debate was finished, to a convivial entertainment, and treated them with the greatest liberality and condescension. During dinner he laid his hands on the shoulders of Luther and Eckius, and gently stroking them said, "Whether the pope exists by DIVINE or by HUMAN RIGHT, HE IS, however, THE POPE." "This prince," says Luther, "would never have made this observation, if he had not felt the force of my arguments."†

2. Luther complains bitterly of the uncivil treatment which he met with in general from the inhabitants and the university of Leipsic; and, he observes on the contrary, what kindnesses and honours they heaped upon his adversary Eckius. Yet notwithstand-

* Luth. Op. vol. i. præf. † Luth. Op. vol. i. Melch. Adam. Seck. p. 74.

ing both their aversion to the reformer, and their attachment to the popedom, Hoffmann, who was at that time rector of the university, and who had been appointed judge of the arguments alleged on both sides, refused to declare to whom the victory belonged; so that the decision was left to the universities of Erfurt and Paris.* The former of these, in spite of the importunate solicitations of George the duke of Saxony, remained perfectly silent; the latter, also, gave no judgment concerning the controversy at Leipsic, though, sometime afterwards,† contrary to the favourable hopes which Luther had conceived of that learned body, they censured, as heretical, several of his positions or theses, collected from his various writings.

3. The romish advocate Maimbourg allows, "that both the disputants displayed much ingenuity and erudition during their combat in the castle of Leipsic, but with this difference; that THE TRUTH, defended by a man of sound principles, like Eckius, vanquished error, though supported with all the knowledge and subtlety of a fine genius." This testimony of an inimical historian proves the celebrity of the talents of Luther; but the FACT of which I would here particularly take notice, is, the undeniable consequence which the exertion of those talents, in vehement and subtle disputation for ten days together, produced on the mind of Eckius. His bitterness and enmity against his opponent is well known to have suddenly increased, from this period, beyond all bounds. The sequel of our narrative will show, with how much personal malice and resentment he sought the destruction of the Saxon reformer, and also how mischievous his rash counsels proved to the interests of the Roman see. The reader will then judge for himself, whether the furious conduct of the papal champion is best explained, on the supposition of his consciousness of superiority and of victory in the affairs at Leipsic, or

* Mosheim, vol. ii. † Not till the year 1521.

a revengeful sense of the humiliation and defeat which he suffered in that memorable contest.*

It was in an accurate acquaintance with the holy scriptures, and with ecclesiastical history, that Luther more particularly manifested his superiority over Eckius. Very full and exact documents are in existence, both of what was said and what was written in the disputation; and no well informed Roman catholic will deny this to be a fair statement of the case. But notwithstanding the increased reputation with which the German theologian departed from the scene of controversy, it was easy to foresee, that the court of Rome would now be more incensed against him than ever. He had indeed almost agreed with his adversary on some of the disputed points; he had even defended the authority of the Roman see, by placing it on the best foundation in his power; in short, he had exhibited a spirit of fidelity, moderation and obedience; but all this could not expiate the unpardonable offence of searching the sacred oracles for himself, of confuting the papal pretensions to divine appointment and infallibility; and (what was deemed perhaps, if not the most heinous, the most dangerous crime of all) of resisting and exposing the flagitious practices of the inferior agents and instruments of ecclesiastical rapine and tyranny. The man, who had proceeded to such extremities, was not to be managed by mild and gentle admonitions; neither was he to be gained over by bribes and flattery; he was an enemy of the holy church, and justly merited all she could inflict in her utmost fury and indignation.

Moreover, popery was not a religion which betrayed only occasional defects and errors. It had long been a SYSTEM of corruption; all the parts of which were thoroughly connected with each other, and conspired together to deceive, defraud, and domineer over mankind. The members of the system sympathized with their head in a remarkable manner: they

* Mosheim, vol. ii. chap. ii. sect. x. and Mr. Maclaine's note.

saw their very existence in its safety; and flew to its defence on the slightest appearance of danger. In return, the sovereign head of this vast body superintended the respective interests of all the members with exquisite care, and even with paternal solicitude. If, in some instances, the conduct of the Roman pontiffs does not exactly accord with this representation, the deviation will be found to have arisen, never from a relaxation or a change of principle, but from pride, contempt, indolence, and a sense of security. This was the case, we have seen, with Leo X. in the very early stages of lutheranism.

Striking examples of this reciprocal sort of sensibility and mutual protection were furnished, in the latter part of this year, 1519, by the two universities of Louvain and Cologne, and the cardinal de Tortosa. There can be no doubt, but that this dignified ecclesiastic, who himself afterwards succeeded Leo X. in the pontificate, acted, in all he did, by the direction of the court of Rome. Accordingly we find one of his letters, addressed to the principal academics of Louvain, full of hard terms against Luther and his writings, at the same time containing stimulative exhortations and admonitions, that they should give a public testimony of their disapprobation of such mischievous heresies. The divines of Louvain appear to have been of themselves sufficiently disposed to this measure, and even to have consulted the cardinal respecting its propriety. He commended their faithful zeal; and the result of this mutual communication was a public decree of the rulers of the university, in which they condemn many of Luther's propositions and doctrines, and pronounce them false, scandalous, and heretical. These warm advocates for the established faith did not stop here. They sent one of Martin Luther's books to the divines of Cologne, and requested them to censure its heretical contents in a public manner. These presently pronounced it full of errors and heresies, directed it to be suppressed, and declared, that it ought to be burnt, and the author of it obliged to make a

public recantation.* THUS, by management of this sort, the friends of the papacy, very soon after their defeat and disgrace at Leipsic, obtained the sanction of two universities in favour of the reigning corruptions, while those learned seminaries, on their part, failed not to secure to themselves the approbation and applause of the Roman see.

It would be an useless employment to detail the particulars of what passed in the conferences at Leipsic, respecting several romish doctrines, which in our times give not the smallest concern to any intelligent protestant.

On the superstitious notion of PURGATORY many arguments and distinctions were produced on both sides. In general, Luther admitted his firm belief of the existence of such a place, and even that some obscure hints of it were to be found in scripture. But he denied that any thing clear and convincing was revealed in any part of the sacred writings, concerning this doctrine.† As the researches of this great man grew deeper, he gradually doubted of several points, which he then held sacred; and, in process of time, he dismissed them from his creed entirely. The roman catholic sentiment of the number of the sacraments, and of the communion under ONE KIND, might be mentioned here.

It was not by accident that Eckius brought forward several propositions concerning the nature OF INDULGENCES. This was the grand question which had produced all the present dissensions in the church. It was closely connected with every inquiry that related to pontifical authority: it was, IN PRACTICE, the exercise of a very material part of that power, which, in THEORY, was pretended to originate in a divine right. To entangle therefore, or crush, the reformer on this point, in a public debate and before a splendid audience, would furnish such a proof of zeal for the faith, of ability to defend it, and of obedience

* Vol. ii. Luth. Op. Wit. † Disput. Lips.

to the hierarchy, as would infallibly insure every reward, which ambition could wish for, or which gratitude could bestow.

Luther extricated himself from the difficulty in which his artful adversary had placed him, with a success which, before the conflict, he had not ventured to expect. Eckius happened to affirm that a sort of medium of opinion ought to be held with respect to indulgences. "On the one hand they ought not to be condemned, and, on the other, they should not be intirely RELIED ON." To the same effect he taught the people in the most public manner. In fact, he seems not to have foreseen, how great an advantage he gave his adversary by this unwary concession. "I had supposed," says Luther, "that this affair of the indulgences would be by far the most difficult point that I should have to manage, and that our disputation would have turned chiefly upon it; whereas it created little or no trouble. I found I could nearly agree to Eckius's explanation. Never on any occasion did papal indulgences receive a more wretched, and unfortunate support. They were treated in a way that almost produced laughter. If the proclaimers of the indulgences had held the same doctrine at the time of vending them, the NAME OF LUTHER would probably have remained unknown. I say, if the people had been informed that the diplomas of indulgence were not to be RELIED ON, these imaginary pardons would have lost all their reputation, and the commissioners, who conducted the sale of them, would have died of hunger." The acuteness of Luther, as a theological disputant, ready to avail himself of the smallest indiscretion of his adversary, appears very manifest from this instance.

His heart, however, was not in these noisy and contentious scenes. Instruction of youth in divinity, and preaching of the gospel of Christ, he considered as his proper business. He used to lament the peculiar infelicity of the age, by which he was obliged to waste in controversies so many hours, that might have been

far better employed in guiding souls into the way of salvation. " How long," cried he, " am I to spend my time and strength in frivolous discussions about indulgences and pontifical authority; subjects, which have not the remotest tendency to benefit the church, or promote practical godliness?"*

That some good might result from the contentions at Leipsic, and that mankind might be less bewildered in the mazes of subtile disputation, this diligent servant of God determined to review carefully all his own positions, which had been the subject of debate in his conference with Eckius, and to publish them with concise explanations, and with arguments in their support, consisting of appeals to scripture and ecclesiastical history. These positions, or, as they were sometimes called, theses or conclusions, amounted, in number, to thirteen, and related chiefly to Roman catholic peculiarities. Several of them, however, gave the author occasion to state and studiously illustrate the scriptural doctrine of GRACE, and the nature of indwelling† sin, as described by St. Paul in the seventh chapter of the Romans. In fallen man, he observes, there remains an internal principle of evil, even after he is renewed by the grace of God. Every christian needs daily repentance, because he sins daily; not indeed by daily perpetrating flagrant crimes, but by falling short of perfect obedience. Hence there is not a just man upon earth; because even in actions that are good in themselves there is precisely so much sin as there is repugnance, or difficulty, or want of cheerfulness in the will. He owns, that divines were accustomed to evade the positive testimony of such passages of scripture, as, ' There is not a just man upon earth, who doeth good and sinneth not;' but, says he, let us listen to St. Paul, ' The good that I would, I do not, but the evil which I would not, that I do.' And again:

* Luther's letter to Emser.

† This word, though not a very common one, has been thought, by excellent divines, to express St. Paul's meaning in Romans vii. verse 20 better than any other.... " Sin that dwelleth in me."

'I delight in the law of God after the inward man, but I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind.' Let human reasoning and human authority, whether of the church or of councils, give place and submit. If an angel from heaven should teach the contrary, I would not believe him.

If, continues Luther, the evil principle, called the flesh, prevented the operation of the good principle called the spirit, in a man so holy and full of grace as the apostle Paul, how can our theologians maintain that there is no sin in good works? 'It is not,' say they, 'sin; it is defect, it is infirmity.' This is an unscriptural and a dangerous way of speaking. In fact, every christian feels a continual conflict between the flesh and the spirit as long as he lives; and therefore in the very best actions there is, in this world, a mixture of the effects of the flesh: but it is not so in heaven. Wherefore, what knowledge other persons may have derived from the scholastic divinity of the times, it is for them to consider. In regard to myself, I am sure I learnt from it nothing of the real nature of sin, of righteousness, of baptism, or of the whole christian life; nor any thing of the excellency of God or his works, his grace, his justice. Faith, hope, charity, were to me words without meaning. In short, I not only learnt nothing right; but I had to UNLEARN every thing which I had acquired in that way. I shall be much surprised if others have succeeded better; but should there be any such, I sincerely congratulate them. In the schools I lost Jesus Christ; I have now found him in St. Paul.

"Search the scriptures" is the precept, which of all others seems to have most deeply impressed the anxious, inquisitive, mind of Luther. And further, in his inquiries, he never forgot that he himself was personally interested in the great truths of revealed religion. He studied the bible, not through curiosity, or the love of fame, but from a sense of the importance of its contents, and of his own dangerous situation. How little have those understood the real character of

this reformer, who have looked on him as a turbulent, ambitious, innovator, impelled by selfish and worldly motives. Nothing can be more affecting than the following account, which he himself gives of his own internal troubles. " However blameless a life I might lead as a monk, I experienced a most unquiet conscience; I perceived myself a sinner before God; I saw that I could do nothing to appease him, and I hated the idea of a just God that punishes sinners. I was well versed in all St. Paul's writings; and, in particular, I had a most wonderful desire to understand the epistle to the Romans. But I was puzzled with the expression, ' THEREIN is the righteousness of God revealed.' My heart rose almost against God with a silent sort of blasphemy: at least in secret I said with great murmur and indignation, Was it not enough that wretched man, already eternally ruined by the curse of original depravity, should be oppressed with every species of misery through the condemning power of the commandment, but that, even through the GOSPEL, God should threaten us with his anger and justice, and thereby add affliction to affliction? Thus I raged with a troubled conscience. Over and over I turned the above mentioned passage to the Romans most importunately. My thirst to know the apostle's meaning was insatiable.

" At length, while I was meditating day and night on the words, and their connexion with what immediately follows, namely, " the just shall live by faith," it pleased God to have pity upon me, to open mine eyes, and to show me, that the righteousness of God, which is here said in the gospel to be REVEALED from faith to faith, relates to the method by which God, in his mercy, justifies a sinner through faith, agreeably to what is written, " the just shall live by faith." Hence, I felt myself a new man, and all the scriptures appeared to have a new face. I ran quickly through them as my memory enabled me; I collected together the leading terms; and I observed, in their meaning, a strict analogy, according to my new views.

Thus, in many instances, the WORK of God means that which he works in us; and the power, and wisdom of God, mean the power and wisdom, which his Spirit operates in the minds of the faithful; and in the same manner are to be understood the PATIENCE, the SALVATION, the GLORY, of God.

"The expression, "RIGHTEOUSNESS of God," now became as sweet to my mind as it had been hateful before; and this very passage of St. Paul proved to me the entrance into paradise."*

This interesting account of the steps by which Luther was led to evangelical light in the important doctrine of justification by faith evidently refers to what passed in his mind about the time of the celebrated disputation at Leipsic; and for that reason may seem not improperly introduced in this place. One of his conclusions in that contest led to a discussion on faith, repentance, and freewill; and we find, in his defence of that conclusion, a similar mode of argumentation. He even produces the very same passage of St. Paul, from the first chapter to the Romans; and blames divines of the stamp of Eckius, for adding to the words, "the just shall live by faith," other words, namely, "but not by faith ONLY," as necessary to prevent mistakes. He quotes also the tenth chapter of the same epistle, "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness," and takes notice that, likewise in this verse, righteousness is attributed to faith only. "The works of faith," continues he, "don't produce the faith, but the faith produces the works. The meaning of the apostle is not, that justified persons neglect good works, but that justification is prior to good works; and that good works can be performed by justified persons only."

Eckius had maintained that some of the actions of good men, and particularly their last actions in dying, were perfectly free from sin. Luther had too high ideas of the holiness of the divine law, and too deep a sense of the evil of sin, and of the depravity of human

* Luth. Op. præf. vol. i

nature, to admit this position. Accordingly he opposed it with all his might, and used strong language in support of the contrary sentiment. "There has not," said he, "for these thousand years been started a more mischievous, pestilential, notion than that God does not demand a perfect fulfilling of all his laws. This is directly to contradict Jesus Christ. God never alters his perfect law; though he pardons us when we break it. Observe, however, he does not pardon those who are asleep, but those who labour, those who fear, and who say with Job, "I know thou wilt not hold me innocent." Never suppose that God does not require an exact regard to every tittle of his law; such a notion will soon ingender pride and make you despise that grace, through which his holy law, as a schoolmaster, should compel you to seek deliverance."

One of Eckius's propositions, concerning the natural powers of the human mind since the fall of our first parents, seemed strongly tinctured with pelagian sentiments; and these were diametrically opposite to Luther's views of the gospel. In this matter, therefore, he did not confine himself merely to the defence of his own conclusions, but exposed the doctrines of Eckius with force and animation, terming them impious and heretical in the highest degree, and inconsistent with the apostle Paul, and the whole gospel of Christ. Again he pressed the grand doctrine of christianity, that we are justified, before God, by faith only; he showed, that this article of belief was the test of orthodoxy or heresy according as it was held soundly or corruptly; that all other points were subordinate and centred in this; and that every objection to it, which could possibly be devised, was done away by this single consideration, namely, that a right faith was necessarily productive of good works. "St. Paul," says he, "speaks of a living, not a dead, faith; for a dead faith is merely a speculative opinion. But, observe, how theologians, building on a solitary passage of St. James, in his second chapter, have dared to oppose the whole current of scripture. Mankind are exceedingly prone to place confidence in their own works; hence,

the great danger of pharisaical doctrine. On the contrary, if you do but take care to instruct the people properly concerning the nature of pure christian faith, they will then understand the power of such a faith to produce good works; they will see that good works can be produced in no other way; and lastly, that these works are, in fact, the spontaneous and infallible consequence of a right faith."

The contemplation of the ways of providence, at all times a rational employment, is never more instructive than when we can trace the gradual progress of divine light, as it breaks in upon the mind of honest, industrious, inquirers after religious truth. Let not therefore the modern critic, whose ideas of the justification of a sinner may, PERHAPS, be more exact and digested than those of Luther were at the time of his controversy with Eckius, hastily contemn, or treat with disrespect, the sentiments and explanations which have been laid before him on this essential point. Let him rather, first, advert to the prevailing ignorance and errors of the clergy in the days of the reformer; and then, with pleasure and surprise, he will observe the immense strides, towards a complete system of christian principles, which were taken by an augustin monk during the year 1519, in the midst of his persecutions; and moreover, on a strict examination, he may be astonished to find how perfectly evangelical also at that time Luther was, in the particular article of justification by faith, as to the substance and general view of this important doctrine. Afterwards he defended and explained it with probably as much accuracy and precision, as most succeeding divines have done, though the question has now been agitated and debated for several centuries.

The rigorous laws of history oblige us not to omit, that Luther, in the same treatise, which contains the defence of his own conclusions against Eckius, hastily expressed a doubt of the divine authority of the epistle of St. James.* Want of a just insight into the views

* Resol. Lips. disp.

of the inspired writer may account for this temerity, but will not excuse it; however, he seems not to have insisted on his scruples, much less to have persevered in them. In regard to his misapprehension of the meaning of this part of holy writ, we may the less wonder, when we reflect that even the very best modern interpreters of the bible do not agree, in their explanation of the second chapter of St. James. Luther conceived that chapter to militate against the doctrine of justification by faith. Truth is seldom seen at once in its full order and proportion of parts: but who can doubt that the Saxon reformer was under a divine influence, which daily taught him his natural sinfulness? All men, who know themselves as he did, can never find rest to their consciences but in Christ alone. Necessity, experience, and the word of God, unite in convincing them, that no other way of peace can be found for sinners but through the Redeemer; and, also, that this is the only way by which they can heartily serve God, love their neighbours, and, in general, be fruitful in good works. But more of this important subject hereafter.

In his literary contest with Eckius, Luther apologizes for the inelegance of his style. He confesses that it was negligent and slovenly, and that he had taken no pains to make it accurate, because he had no expectation of immortal fame, nor a desire for it. I am drawn, says he, by force into this contest. I mean, as soon as I can consistently with my conscience, to retire into a corner. Some other person shall appear on the stage, God willing. Such was the real modesty of Luther; and so little did he apprehend, that the less he sought for glory, the more he should attain it.

In fact, the publications of Luther were circulated throughout Germany, and were read with the greatest avidity by all ranks and orders. Eckius and other advocates of the roman catholic cause answered the heretic with great heat and indignation. Luther replied with the promptitude and precision, and also with the zeal and confidence of a man, who was perfectly master of the arguments on both sides of the questions in

dispute, felt deeply interested in the establishment of truth, and had thoroughly examined the foundations of his opposition to the prevailing corruptions. By these means the discussions at Leipsic were detailed with minuteness, and continued with spirit; they every where became topics of common conversation; and, as Luther constantly appealed to plain sense, and the written word of God, the scholastic subtilities of Eckius lost their weight and reputation among the people. It is not difficult to see, that the advantages, which, in this way, the cause of the reformation must have derived from the public contest at Leipsic and its consequences, must have been very considerable.

Particular and important instances might be mentioned.

The elector of Saxony was the only prince who publicly favoured the reformation; and there is good reason to believe, that both his knowledge of the scriptures and his kindness towards Luther were much increased by what he read, and heard from others, relative to the controversy in 1519. It appears from very authentic memoirs by Spalatinus, that the mind of Frederic had been much exercised about divine things, even before his Wittemberg theologian had dared to expose and withstand the corrupt practices of the Roman see. With much diligence and constant prayer he had read the word of God; and was extremely displeased with the usual modes of interpreting it. And when, through the grace of God and the instrumentality of Luther, some rays of evangelical light began to break forth, he opened himself explicitly to his chaplain, Spalatinus, to this effect. "I have always indulged a secret hope, that in a short time we should be blessed with a purer knowledge of what we ought to believe." Meanwhile he gave attention to practical sermons, and read the scriptures with the greatest delight; especially the four gospels; from which he collected many excellent passages, and so impressed them on his memory, that whenever occasion required, he could readily apply them with great advantage and comfort. He used particularly to insist on that saying

of our Lord in the fifteenth chapter of St. John, "Without me ye can do nothing." "He would dwell on this passage," says Spalatinus, "more than any other. He considered it as decisive against the vulgar notion of freewill; and on this very ground he argued against it, long before Erasmus had dared to publish his miserable, unscriptural, performance on the natural liberty of the human mind." "How can it possibly be," said the prince, "that mankind should be perfectly free from all corrupt bias," when Christ himself says, "without me ye can do nothing?"

Such were the reflections, which the disputation at Leipsic, concerning the necessity of GRACE, and the natural condition of man, since the fall of Adam, appear to have produced in the pious mind of Frederic the WISE. While they imply considerable insight into several of the essential doctrines of christianity, they also throw much light on the religious character of this prince. Frederic had a deep sense of his own weakness and sinfulness; a never failing preparative this, for the hearty reception of the glad tidings of the gospel! He felt much anxiety that the faith of Christ might be preached among the people in its purity; and this anxiety kept pace with his own progress in practical religion. Another excellent symptom of a divine teaching and of truly spiritual affections! Still this excellent personage remained in bondage to papal authority and papal superstitions; and hence, though his views of the bible were in perfect harmony with those of Luther, and though he further agreed with the reformer, that shameful abuses ought to be corrected, dangerous errors exposed, salutary truths propagated, and mankind put into possession of the words of eternal life, he nevertheless continued to feel most disquieting apprehensions lest, in compassing these important purposes, OFFENCE should be given to the majesty of the Roman pontiffs.

It may deserve notice, that soon after the conferences at Leipsic, the elector of Saxony had a severe illness; and that the industrious Luther, notwithstanding the multiplicity of his necessary employments, found

time to compose a small tract, for the express purpose of comforting this good prince in his afflictions. The wisdom, the sincerity, and the christian affection, which the author exhibited in this little treatise would, no doubt, have a tendency to increase the estimation in which he was already held by Frederic.*

The celebrated Philip Melancthon, who is always numbered among the most illustrious and respectable instruments of the reformation, was actually present at the public disputations with Eckius. Some say, that he placed himself near Carolstadt and suggested so many things to him during the combat, that Eckius called out to him, "Philip, hold your tongue, mind your own business; and don't interfere with mine." However, he himself tells us, that he was a mere spectator and hearer; and that he sat among the crowd. As the dispute continued many days, the different accounts might, perhaps, appear sufficiently consistent, were we acquainted with all the circumstances. Melancthon concludes one of his letters to Oecolampadius in the following manner; "Eckius was much admired for his many and striking ingenuities. You know Carolstadt; he is certainly a man of worth and of extraordinary erudition. As to Luther, whom I have long known most intimately, his lively genius, his learning, and eloquence, are the objects of my admiration; and it is impossible not to be in love with his truly sincere and pure christian spirit."

As the reader by this time must be tolerably acquainted with the ecclesiastical combat at Leipsic, it will be unnecessary to detain him any longer with particulars from Melancthon's report of that famous controversy. The name of this great man is here in-

* The opinion, which Erasmus entertained of this little tract, is expressed in a letter, written several years after, to the bishop of Basil. "I send you a little book, of which Luther is the author. It is divided into fourteen heads, and is extremely approved, even by those, who, in general, have the greatest possible aversion to his doctrines. He wrote it before matters came to the present extremities. The man has been enraged by hostile treatment; I heartily wish that, by the means of friendly admonitions, he might be brought back to moderate sentiments."

Seckendorf observes on this extract from Erasmus, "The disease of the church at that time was not of such a nature, that it could be cured by any of Erasmus' plasters."

troduced, chiefly for the purpose of showing, how the roman catholic expectations of the effect of the ostentatious challenge of Eckius were frustrated in every way. Melancthon was then only about twenty-three years of age; and as yet, had employed his time principally in the duties of his Greek professorship and in the cultivation of general literature. Already, indeed, he had favoured Luther's intentions of teaching pure christianity and of delivering it from the reigning darkness and superstition; but his wishes in this respect had hitherto originated in the native candor and benevolence of his temper, and in his abhorrence of all disguise, artifice and tyranny, rather than in any distinct insight which he had acquired into particular instances of the corruption of christian doctrine, or of the shameful practices of the ecclesiastical domination. The conferences at Leipsic seem to have had a mighty effect in first determining this elegent scholar to employ his talents in the study of theology. As Melancthon is said to have possessed the rare faculty of "discerning truth in its most intricate connexions and combinations," it was not probable that such a person should be moved either by the flimsy objections of Eckius, or by his pompous display of scholastic arguments. He was not, however, blind to the dangerous influence of a man, who had some pretensions to learning, who had a strong memory, and who, being constantly impelled by ambitious hopes of advancement, and unrestrained by modesty or conscience, was ever ready to make the most positive assertions. In listening to the sophistry of this papal advocate, Melancthon became better acquainted than before with the argumentative resources of the romish religion; at the same time that the solid reasonings of Luther, supported by constant appeals to the scriptures, effectually convinced his mind of the soundness of the principles of his industrious and persecuted friend, and determined him to embark, in the cause of religious liberty, with zeal and fidelity. From the period of this famous public disputation, he applied himself most intensely to the interpretation of the

scriptures, and the defence of pure christian doctrine; and he is justly esteemed by protestants to have been, under divine providence, the most powerful coadjutor of the Saxon reformer. His mild and peaceable temper, his aversion to schismatic contention, his reputation for piety and for knowledge, and above all, his happy art of exposing error and maintaining truth in the most perspicuous language, all these endowments concurred to render him eminently serviceable to the revival of the religion of Christ. Little did Eckius imagine, that the public disputation, in which he had foreseen nothing but victory, and exultation, and the downfal of lutheranism, would give rise to another theological champion, who should contend for christian truth and christian liberty with the primitive spirit of an apostle. At Wittemberg, Melancthon had probably been well acquainted with Luther's lectures on divinity; but it was in the citadel of Leipsic, that he heard the romish tenets defended by all the arguments that ingenuity could devise; there his suspicions were strengthened respecting the evils of the existing hierarchy; and there his righteous spirit was roused to imitate, in the grand object of his future inquiries and exertions, the indefatigable endeavours of his zealous and adventurous friend.

The pious reader will not think this relation tedious. In the event and consequences of the ecclesiastical conflict between the romish and the protestant advocates he will see much cause to adore the wisdom and goodness of that Being, "who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."*

* Ephes. chap. i. verse xi.

END OF PART I.

APPENDIX.

GROSSETESTE. Page 57.

THE honest and intrepid spirit, with which this excellent prelate opposed the scandalous practices of pope Innocent IV. sufficiently appears from the seventh chapter of this volume. But the christian reader may not be displeased to see additional proofs of the genuine humility of his mind. Selfrighteousness and selfconfidence seem to have been his aversion in the extreme. Dependence on God as a reconciled father in Christ Jesus was his grand practical principle. The following passages are translated from the Latin Opuscula of Grosseteste.*

While he was archdeacon of Leicester, in one of his letters he writes thus: "Nothing that occurs in your letters ought to give me more pain than your styling me a person invested with authority, and indued with the lustre of knowledge. So far am I from thinking as you do, that I feel myself unfit even to be the disciple of a person of authority; moreover in innumerable matters which are objects of knowledge, I perceive myself enveloped in the darkness of ignorance. But did I really possess the great qualities you ascribe to me, HE alone would be worthy of the praise; and the whole of it ought to be referred unto HIM, to whom we daily say, Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy name give the glory."

The same modesty and selfabasement accompanied him to the episcopal chair. In his subsequent letters, he usually styled himself, "Robert, by divine permission, the poor minister of the church of Lincoln."

* Vol. ii. Fascic. rer.

On the important subject of divine grace, he expresses himself in the following manner. "Grace is that good pleasure of God, whereby he is pleased to bestow upon us what we have not deserved; and the gift is for our advantage, not his. Wherefore it is very clear, that all the good we possess, whether it be natural, or freely conferred afterwards, proceeds from the grace of God; because there is no good thing, the existence of which he does not will; and for God to will any thing, is to do it; therefore there can be no good of which he is not the author. He it is, who turns the human will from evil, and converts it to good, and also causes it to persevere in the same. Nevertheless, man's freewill operates in this matter, as the grain shoots by an external germinative power, and by the heat of the sun and the moisture of the earth. For if it was impossible that we should turn from the evil and be converted to the good, we should not be commendable in so doing, nor should we be ordered in scripture to do so. And again, if we could do this without the grace of God, there would be no propriety in praying to God for it, nor would our success depend upon his will. . . . . A will to do good, by which a man becomes conformed to the will of God, is grace freely given. The divine will is grace; and grace is then said to be infused, when the divine will begins to operate upon our will."

This extract contains a fair representation of Grosseteste's sentiments; and may be thought the more expedient, because some authors, in their accounts of the faith of this good prelate, seem to have suppressed such expressions as did not well accord with their own views. The historian endeavours to avoid controversy; yet he may be allowed to remark, that on the subjects of grace, freewill, and justification, bishop Grosseteste does not always preserve an invariable consistency. The wonder however, as hath been justly observed, ought to be, that he should have seen "so well as he did. In general, he was eloquent, and mighty in the scriptures; fervent in spirit, speaking

and teaching boldly the things of the Lord; though, like Apollos, he sometimes needed an Aquila and Priscilla to expound to him the way of God more perfectly."

BRADWARDINE. Page 89.

Sir Henry Savile, the learned editor of the principal work of Bradwardine, informs us, that this extraordinary man devoted his main application to the study of theology and mathematics; and that particularly in the latter he distanced, perhaps the most skilful of his contemporaries. In proof of these assertions the editor refers to several of Bradwardine's mathematical tracts, and to a large manuscript volume of astronomical tables, which sir Henry had then in his own possession, and considered as a very elaborate and valuable performance. "But in divinity," says he, "this single treatise which I now publish, will be a lasting monument of his superior talents. It was written in support of the cause of God against the pelagian heresy, which experience shows to be a growing evil in every age. The substance of the work had been delivered in lectures at Oxford; and the author, at the request of the students of Merton college, arranged, enlarged, and polished them, while he was chancellor of the diocese of London. No sooner was this performance given to the public, than it was received with the greatest applause of all learned doctors, and found its way into almost every library throughout Europe. As Bradwardine was a very excellent mathematician, he endeavoured to treat theological subjects with a mathematical accuracy; and was the first divine, as far as I know, who pursued that method. Hence this book against pelagianism is one regular, connected series of reasoning, from principles or conclusions which have been demonstrated before.

"If, in the several lemmas and propositions, a ma-

thematical accuracy is not on all occasions completely preserved, the reader must remember to ascribe the defect to the nature of the subject, rather than to the author."

This account of the extreme singularity of Bradwardine's taste appeared worthy of notice.

Mr. Milner, in p. 89, has concisely observed, that Bradwardine attended king Edward the third in his French wars, and that he often preached before the army. His biographer, sir Henry, is more particular: he tells us, that some writers of that time attributed the signal victories of Edward, rather to the virtues and holy character of his chaplain and confessor Bradwardine, than to the bravery or prudence of the monarch or of any other person. "He made it his business to calm and mitigate the fierceness of his master's temper when he saw him either immoderately fired with warlike rage, or improperly flushed with the advantages of victory. He also often addressed the army; and with so much meekness, and persuasive discretion, as to restrain them from those insolent excesses which are too frequently the attendants of military success."

Bradwardine's treatise against the pelagians, which is so much extolled by sir H. Savile, is a folio of almost nine hundred pages. It may not be disagreeable to the reader to peruse a few additional extracts, on account of, 1. the important matter they contain, and 2. the mathematical accuracy of manner which this author constantly endeavours to support, and which is, in general, so unusual in the treating of such subjects.

OF THE DIVINE BEING.

Among the first positions, which he undertakes to prove, are these, that God is not contingently, but necessarily perfect. That he is incapable of changing; that he is not liable, for example, to the emotions of joy, sorrow, anger; or, in any respect passive. Since if he was, he would be changeable; whereas God is

always the same, and never varies. He cannot change for the better, because he is already perfectly good. Neither can he change for the worse, because he is necessarily perfect, and therefore cannot cease to be so. Lastly, he cannot change to a state equally good, because such an alteration could answer no end, and would in reality imply some defect.*

He observes, that the DIVINE WILL is universally efficacious, which, he contends, is a mark of much higher perfection, than if his will could be frustrated, hindered, or miss of its intent. If it were possible for God to wish any thing, and yet not bring it to pass, he would and must from that moment cease to be perfectly happy; especially as it is impossible that he should choose any thing but what is right.

CONCERNING MERIT.

Most powerfully he beats down the doctrine of HUMAN MERIT. He will not allow that men can merit at the hand of God, either antecedently or subsequently, that is, either prior to grace received, or after it. Is it not more bountiful to give than to barter? to bestow a thing freely, and for nothing, than for the sake of any preceding or subsequent desert, which would be a sort of price? Even a generous man often confers benefits on others without any view to the previous or succeeding merit of the object. Much more does God do this, who is infinitely richer in bounty, than the most liberal of his creatures.†

Has not TRUTH itself declared, "my Father worketh hitherto, and I work." And does not the apostle of truth use the words, "in him we live, move, and have our being?" I therefore repeat, that it must be manifest to every one, who has a sound understanding, 1. that no thing whatever can put any other thing into motion, unless God himself, by his own proper influence, give motion to the thing so moved: 2. that no thing whatever can put any other into motion, without God's being the immediate mover of it. And

* Lib. I. cap. i. † Lib. I. cap. i.

even, 3. that whatsoever is put in motion by any thing else, is more immediately moved by God himself than by the instrument which sets it in motion, be that instrument what it will. Now if any person should cavil at this doctrine, and say, that this argument would make the supreme Being the author of many actions, even wicked actions, which are not fit to be named, the answer is, the words which express those actions are not to be taken strictly or absolutely, but only as they relate to the creature; not as descriptive of the real essence of the actions, but only of their nature when viewed as the effects of human powers. . . . . In every formation and in every motion there must be some unoriginated former; else the process would be endless.*

It should be remembered, that the historian never pretends to dictate to his reader, nor even to explain his own opinion on these intricate subjects. He only ventures to lay before him the judgment of an excellent christian, and a most acute metaphysician of the fifteenth century.

OF THE DIVINE KNOWLEDGE.

What Bradwardine delivers concerning the KNOWLEDGE of God, is worthy of the utmost attention.

It is certain, that God hath a knowledge of all things present, of all things past, and of all things to come; which knowledge is, in the highest sense, actual, particular, distinct, and infallible. It may be considered as either simple, or approbative. His simple or absolute knowledge extends to every thing. His knowledge of approbation, over and above the former, includes his good pleasure and complacency of will. He produces scripture in support of this distinction of the divine knowledge, as Matthew xxv. 12. Verily I say unto you, I KNOW you not. And 1 Cor. viii. 3. If any man love God, he is KNOWN of him.†

The fifteenth chapter of the first book is wholly taken up in proving, THAT THINGS KNOWN are not the

* Ibid. cap. 4 & 5. † Ibid. cap. 6 & 7.

foundation of the knowledge of God. Knowledge is a principal perfection in God. If therefore HIS knowledge were derived from the objects with which it is conversant, it would follow that a part of the perfection of God was derived from some other source than himself, in which case HE must cease to be selfperfect. He would moreover cease to be all sufficient: he would stand in need of created help to render his knowledge complete. And how could his glory be unrivaled, if any portion of it was suspended on borrowed assistance? Add to this, if the things that are known by God, are verily the producing cause of his knowing them, they must be antecedent to his knowledge, either in the order of time, or of nature. But they are not prior to his knowledge in either of these respects; for they are all created in time; whereas God and his knowledge are eternal. Besides, if the Deity received any degree of his intelligence from the beings he has made, he would cease to be purely active; he would be passive in that reception. Whence it would also follow that he must be susceptible of change. Nay, he would degenerate into a sort of inferiority to the things known, and being dependent on them for his knowledge, he would, so far, be less noble than they. The divine understanding would, like ours, be occasionally in a state of suspense and fluctuation. God might be said to possess rather the power or capability of knowing, than knowledge itself. He would only be disposed to know either this or that indifferently as the thing might turn, and would be actuated and determined by agencies and causalities extraneous to himself. And thus he would neither be the highest nor the first. For these reasons Aristotle and Averroes were right in affirming that the divine knowledge is perfect as it exists in God himself, and neither is nor can be improved by any things that are known. In a similar manner, also, argues Peter Lombard. If the things, says he, which God knows, were the basis of the divine knowledge, it would follow, that creatures contributed to improve

their Maker's wisdom; and thus foolish man, or even the meanest beast of the field, would be exalted into an assistant, a counsellor, and a teacher of the all wise God. Lastly, the testimony of Augustin is very much in point: God, says he, knows all his creatures both corporeal and incorporeal, not because they exist; for he was not ignorant of what he intended to create; but they therefore exist, because he foreknew them. Amidst the innumerable revolutions of advancing and departing ages, the knowledge of God is neither lessened nor augmented. No incident can possibly arise, which THOU, THOU, who knowest all things, didst not expect and foresee; and every created nature is what it is, in consequence of thy knowing it as such.

Neither are we to understand our profound scholar, as though he were contending for the mere ABSTRACT KNOWLEDGE of God as a principle of causation. No: according to him the efficacy of the divine knowledge depends on the sovereign irresistibility of the divine will. The will of God, says he, in his tenth chapter, is universally efficacious, and invincible, and necessitates as a cause. It cannot be impeded, much less defeated by any means whatever.

The following argument is expressed in terms remarkably concise and nervous.

If you allow, 1. that God is ABLE to do a thing, and 2. that he is WILLING to do a thing, then 3. I affirm THAT thing will not, cannot go unaccomplished. God either does it now, or will certainly do it at the destined season, otherwise he must either lose his power or change his mind. HE is in want of nothing to carry his purposes into execution. Hence the remark of the philosopher, Si potuit et voluit, egit. He that hath will and power to do a thing, certainly doth that thing. Again, if the will of God may be frustrated, the defeat would arise from the created wills of men or angels; but we can never allow any created will, angelic or human, to be superior to the will of the Creator. Both the divine knowledge and the divine will are altogether unchangeable, since if either

one or the other were to undergo an alteration, a change must take place in God himself.

OF PROVIDENCE.

These maxims induced Bradwardine to conclude, that whatever things come to pass, are brought about by the providence of God.* Even a prudent master of a family, says he, takes care of every thing that belongs to him, and makes provision beforehand, according to the best of his knowledge and power; and leaves nothing unregulated in his house, but exactly appoints the due time and place for every thing.

OF FATE.

The sentiments of Bradwardine respecting FATE are evidently the result of profound thinking.

Many persons affirm the existence of fate; and many, particularly of the catholic doctors, deny there is any such thing. The stoics are advocates for fate; on the contrary, Augustin reprobates the idea of it as inconsistent with a sound faith. The truth seems to be this. If by fate is to be understood an inevitable, coercive necessity, arising from the influence of the heavenly bodies, such a notion is not to be maintained: but if the word be taken in a lower sense, as implying, for example, only a disposition, or propensity in men to certain actions, this sentiment with certain explanations may be supported; and most certainly the idea of a divine fate must be admitted, whether we consider the word as derived from FIAT or from FANDO. Is it not written that in the beginning of the creation God said, fiat lux, let there be light, and there was light? Is it not written again, He SPAKE and it was done? Now this divine fate is chiefly a branch of the divine will which is the efficacious cause of all things. Augustin was of the same mind. "All that connexion," says he, "and that train of causes, whereby every thing is what it is, are by the stoics called fate; the

* Ibid. cap 27.

whole of which fate is to be ascribed to the will and power of the supreme Being, who most justly is believed to foreknow all things, and to leave nothing unordained. The energy of the divine will is unconquerably extended through all things..... We never reject that train of causes, wherein the will of God has the grand sway. We avoid however giving it the name of fate; unless indeed you derive the word from fando, that is, from SPEAKING. For we cannot but acknowledge, that it is written in the scriptures, God hath ONCE spoken, and these two things have I heard, that power belongeth unto God; and that mercy is with thee, for thou wilt render unto every man according to his works. Now when it is said, God hath SPOKEN ONCE, the meaning is, that he hath spoken unchangeably, and irreversibly, even as he foreknew all things that should come to pass. The kingdoms of men are absolutely appointed by divine providence; which if any one is desirous for that reason to attribute to fate, meaning by that word, the will and power of God, let him hold fast the SENTIMENT and only correct the PHRASE." Bradwardine concludes his chapter on fate with the following remarkable quotation from Augustin. "But though the supreme Being is the undoubted origin of every determined train of causes, it by no means follows that nothing is in the power of the human will. For our wills themselves belong to those trains of causes, which are definitively fixed and arranged in the divine mind; and it is in that way that they become the causes of human actions. Our wills have just so much power as God willed and foreknew they should have; and consequently whatever be the precise degree of the power which they possess, that they absolutely must possess, and that they inevitably must exert; for both their powers and their operations were foreknown of God, whose foreknowledge cannot be deceived."*

These examples may be sufficient to convey some idea of the acuteness of the reasoning powers of Brad-

* Ibid.

wardine; and the intelligent reader will be at no loss to understand in what manner the conclusions of this celebrated theologian bear upon certain controverted points in divinity, and particularly upon the pelagian system! Our author closely follows the advocates of that heresy through all their intricate windings; and exposes their antichristian sophisms and subterfuges with infinite patience and address. Of course his subject leads him to examine and discuss in a very copious manner that most difficult of all inquiries, the nature of the human will, and of liberty and necessity. Large and instructive extracts might easily be produced on these points from his second book; but as they would detain us too long, it will be more expedient to take our leave of the treatise after having selected a passage or two, which are more of a practical nature, and yet altogether related to the pelagian dispute.

ON TEMPTATION.

The human will, without a supply of the special assistance of God, cannot conquer so much as a single temptation. And this special assistance, Bradwardine expressly says is not freewill, but the UNCONQUERABLE will of God. "Armed with this, his tempted children get the better of every temptation; destitute of this, they are constantly defeated. Besides, if man could overcome temptation by his own power, it would be vain and idle in him to pray to God for victory over it, or to give him thanks for victory obtained." Lib. ii. cap. v.

ON GRACE.

Every creature is indebted to Almighty God for various gifts; and these gifts may with sufficient propriety be called the grace of God, grace freely given. But, with very great thankfulness, we ought further to observe, that there is such a thing as a peculiar species of this free grace, which makes a man accepted of God, makes him a friend of God, and dear to him; makes him his child for the present, and a partaker of

his glory in heaven. Now, continues he, the mischievous pelagians maintain that this sort of grace is not given freely by God, but is to be obtained by preceding merits. I myself was once so foolish and empty, when I first applied myself to the study of philosophy, as to be seduced by this error. For whenever I attended to the manner in which the divines handled this point, I own the pelagian hypothesis appeared to me the more likely to be true. In the schools of the philosophers I rarely heard a single word said concerning grace; unless indeed sometimes an equivocal expression might drop from the disputants, but nothing farther. Whereas my ears were assailed, the day through, with such assertions as, "We are the masters of our own free actions; it is in our own power to do well or ill, and to have virtues or vices." And when I heard those parts of the scriptures read in the church, which extol the grace of God and lower the freewill of man; for example, "It is not of him that willeth, or of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy," and many similar passages; this doctrine of grace was very disagreeable to my ungrateful mind. But afterwards, when I reflected on the nature of the divine character, on the knowledge of God, and his prescience, I began to perceive some few distant rays of light respecting this matter, even before I became a regular attendant of the lectures in divinity. I seemed to see, but by no means clearly, that the grace of God is prior, both in nature and in time, to any good actions that men can possibly perform; and I return thanks to God, from whom proceeds every good thing, for thus freely enlightening my understanding. St. Augustin confesses that he himself had been formerly in a similar mistake. "I was once," says he, "a pelagian in my principles. I thought that faith towards God was not the gift of God, but that we procured it by our own powers, and that then, through the use of it, we obtained the gifts of God; I never supposed that the preventing grace of God was the proper cause of our faith, till my mind was struck in a particular manner by the apostle's ar-

gument and testimony, What hast thou that thou hast not received? and if thou hast received it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it? My mind had been puffed up with worldly books, worldly wisdom, and worldly knowledge; but after that my heart was visited with the influences of divine grace, I grasped with the greatest eagerness the sacred writings which were dictated by the holy Spirit; and above the rest, those of the apostle Paul. Then fell to the ground all my objections, and all the apparent contradictions in the scriptures. The bible spoke to my mind one simple language of pure truth, and with this additional praise of divine grace constantly inculcated, that no man should glory as though he had not received." Bradwardine then proceeds to say,

In this whole business I follow the steps of Augustin as closely as I can, for he alone appears to me to be both the true apostolic logician and philosopher; and certainly he is very different from many learned doctors. The great point to be maintained is, that God gives his grace FREELY in the strictest sense of the word, and without merit on the part of man. For if God did not bestow his grace in this perfectly gratuitous manner, but on account of some subordinate contingent uncertain cause, he could not possibly foresee how he should bestow his free gifts. The word grace evidently implies that there is no antecedent merit: And in this way the apostle to the Romans appears to argue, when he says :" And if by grace then it is no more of works. Otherwise grace is no more grace. Now to him that worketh, is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt." All this is perfectly intelligible even in the conduct of liberal and magnificent HUMAN characters. They frequently bestow their gifts from a pure spirit of liberality without the smallest previous claim on the score of merit. And shall not God, whose perfections are infinite, do more than this? St. Paul says, that God commended his love to us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us: and that when we were enemies, we were

reconciled to God by the death of his Son. St. Paul was in a peculiar manner a child of grace: with gratitude therefore he honours and extols its efficacy in all his epistles; and particularly in his epistle to the Romans throughout he defends his doctrines with great precision and copiousness. "Every mouth," says he, "must be stopped and all the world become guilty before God. By the deeds of the law no flesh can be justified: men must be justified freely by his grace. By grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast." Pelagius objects in the following manner; if grace be perfectly free, and if all men be alike, why is grace given to this man and not to that? Augustin, on a similar occasion, exposes the wildness of such reasoning thus: "You might as well say, I am a man; Christ was a man; why am not I the same as he? We have a common nature; and with God there is no respect of persons; why then are his gifts so different? Would any christian, nay would any madman argue so; and yet the principles of Pelagius would carry us this length?" Again, the pelagians produce such scriptures as these; "The Lord is with you while ye be with him, and if ye seek him he will be found of you."* "Turn ye,..... and I will turn unto you."† From which they would infer, that the grace of God is proportioned to the merits of men. But all this would be to no purpose, if they would but compare one scripture with another: for example: "Turn us, O God of our salvation;‡ and after that I was turned, I repented:§ And, turn us unto thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned."‖ Undoubtedly such expressions as turn yourselves, &c..... relate to the free power which every man has to WILL; but if Pelagius had half an eye, he might see, that God, in giving the precept which directs us to turn unto him, influences also the human will and excites it to action, not indeed in opposition to our free choice, but the reverse,

* 2 Chron. xv. 2. † Zech. iii. 3. ‡ Psalm lxxxv. 4. § Jer. xxxi. 19. ‖ Lam. v. 21.

as I have all along maintained. Hence it is written: Without me ye can do nothing. And again, I have laboured more abundantly than you all, yet not I but the grace of God within me. And lastly, I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; and I will cleanse you from your idols. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart, and will give you a heart of flesh. Lib. i. cap. 35.

LOVE, PATIENCE, HUMILITY, AND THANKSGIVING,

Are the subjects of the thirty-fourth chapter of the second book. And these are handled with great force and eloquence. A short specimen is given in page 99 of this history. It may be worth while to subjoin a few sentences more, for the purpose of showing how steadily the author keeps his eye on the mischiefs of pelagianism.

I know, says he, O Lord, I know, and with grief I relate, that there are certain proud pelagians, who choose rather to trust in themselves than in God. They think that if they have but freewill, and are the sole masters of their own actions, they are sufficiently safe, and have a good foundation for hope. O ye vain children of men, why will ye use a false balance? Why will ye trust in yourselves, who are covered with sins, miseries, and defects, rather than in HIM, who is infinitely good and compassionate, and plenteous in his inestimable donations? Why will ye not place your hopes on HIS happy government, who cannot err; and no longer on yourselves, who continually err and stray like lost sheep? Why rely on your own diminutive, infirm, and fragile powers; and not on his almighty help, whose strength is boundless and irresistible? Beware of the prophet's curse: "Thus saith the Lord, cursed be the man, that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord." "I am astonished," says St. Au-

gustin, " that, notwithstanding the apostle declares, it is of faith, that it might be by grace, to the end the promise might be sure, men can choose rather to rely on their own debility than on the strength of the divine promise. But you will tell me, that in regard to myself, the divine promise is altogether uncertain. Be it so: What then? Can you depend upon your own will so as to be assured of your future salvation? What, have you no fears on that head? Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall. Since then there may be uncertainty in either way, why not place your faith, hope, and charity, where there is stability and good ground for dependence? Strange doctrine of the pelagians! Tell men, say they, of the greatness of their own natural powers, and such preaching will excite them to virtue; but when you inform them that nothing is to be done without the compassion, the help, and the grace, of God, you break their spirits and drive them to despair. Thus have they that confidence in their own insignificant powers, which all holy men have in the boundless mercy of God; and thus do the former declare war against those very free gifts of God, by the assistance of which, the latter successfully fight against their innate corruptions..... O pelagians, how is it that ye, who fancy yourselves so acute, do not see the dilemma into which your opinions necessarily bring you. Either you rob the Almighty of his prescience, or if you admit that attribute, ye must at the same time admit the conclusiveness of this reasoning. You desire to have ground for hope; it is my prayer that you should, but let your hope be in the Lord. For my part, it is good for me to draw near to God, and to put my trust in the Lord God. " Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, whose hope the Lord is." It is this perfect confidence in God, which fortifies the mind of a good man against every species of adversity. He knows that God is most wise, just, and compassionate, and that HE never falls into error; and he knows also that all things work together for good to them that love God. He learns

therefore, with the apostles and many other holy men, even to rejoice in sufferings.

A genuine love of God requires us to employ every faculty we possess, mental and corporeal, for the praise, honour, and glory of God; moreover, we ought freely to submit to every inconvenience and disadvantage, even to the irrecoverable loss of ourselves, rather than offend his divine Majesty in the slightest degree.

Grant, I beseech thee, good Lord, that as I thus pronounce my duty with my lips, I may efficaciously perform the same, and persevere unto the end: and do thou, I humbly beg, of thy great compassion, deign to accept this bounden service which thou hast prepared me to perform, as being the only recompense I can possibly make. More than this I neither have, nor ever shall have; unless, perhaps, it may be thought more, most earnestly to wish both to know and to do, under all circumstances, what is altogether agreeable to THY WILL. Grant that THIS also may be my heart's desire; and I humbly ask these things, as a poor, miserable, mendicant sinner. Is there any thing further than this for which I can ask. I do not see that there is, though I turn my thoughts every way: but if there be, I entreat thee, O Lord, with the most devout supplication, to answer my prayer in this respect also; that so, for thy unspeakable benefits bestowed freely upon me, I may make the most grateful return in my power, and manifest the feelings of my heart by incessant thanksgiving.

St. Augustin, one of thy most grateful children observes, that whether we would use our minds in contemplation, or our mouths in speaking, or our pens in writing, we cannot be better employed than in giving thanks to God. It is not easy to produce a sentiment more concise in the expression, more pleasant to the ear, more grateful to the understanding, or more useful in practice. The same author was, no doubt, taught by thee to say, that there is true wisdom in the worship of God, which very materially consists in gratitude. Hence we are particularly ad-

monished in the communion service "to give thanks to our Lord God." Let us therefore humbly acknowledge that every good thing we possess is from above and cometh down from the Father of lights; and with our whole heart let us give thanks to our Lord God continually.

WICKLIFF. Page 101—137.

It is observed in the history, page 110, that the distinguishing tenet of Wickliff was, undoubtedly, the election of grace. He calls the church an assembly of predestinated persons. Much more might be produced to the same effect. On some occasions he speaks in such strong terms on this subject, that he has been understood to lean even to the doctrines of absolute necessity and fatalism. The student of ecclesiastical history may be pleased to have some of the evidence, relative to this matter, laid before him, that he may have the opportunity of judging for himself.

In our account of the proceedings of the council of Constance, p. 199, it appears that the heretical opinions of Wickliff were digested into forty-five specific articles, and unanimously condemned by that assembly. Two of those articles were, viz.

Article 26. The prayer of the reprobate is of no avail: and

Article 27. All things happen from absolute necessity.*

The manner in which this great man defended the latter, proves him to have been a deep thinker and a skilful disputant.

Our Lord, says he in his Trialogus, affirmed, that such or such an event should come to pass. Its accomplishment therefore was unavoidable. The antecedent is necessary: by parity of argument the consequent is so too. The consequent is not in the power of any

* L'Enfant.

created being, forasmuch as the declarations of Christ, and the elections of his mind, are not liable to accidents. And therefore, as it is absolutely certain and cannot be otherwise but that Christ hath foretold certain events, those events must necessarily come to pass. The same kind of argument will demonstrate every event to be necessary, the future existence of which hath been previously determined by God: and it will make no difference, in whatever manner, or by whatever after discoveries in time, it may have pleased God to inform us that he had actually determined so, before the creation of the world. If the thing be clearly and necessarily so, namely, that God did predetermine any event, the consequence is inevitable; that event must take place. Now what can prevent future events from having been predetermined by the Deity? want of knowledge? inconstancy of will? efficacy of impediments to interrupt his purpose? But with respect to God there is no room for any of these suppositions. Every future event must therefore necessarily take place.*

Wickliff states the above argument, drawn from the prophecies of our Lord, with great triumph. It had puzzled, he said, the very best reasoners; and by its brilliancy had absolutely confounded superficial divines; among whom he reckons the then bishop of Armagh, who owned that he had laboured for twenty years to reconcile the freewill of man with the certain completion of Christ's predictions; and after all, saw no way of evading the conclusion in favour of necessity, but by allowing that Christ might possibly have been mistaken and have misinformed his church in regard to future events.

From this and similar passages, it has been concluded that Wickliff was a fatalist. The whole question turns upon the meaning of such expressions as, "sicut necessario Christus illud asseruit, ita necessario illud eveniet." The just interpretation of which,

* Lib. iii. cap. 9. Trialog.

according to Wickliff's ideas, is given, I think, in the translation above. He never meant to say that Christ was not a free agent, but merely that it was absolutely CERTAIN, and could not be otherwise, that Christ HAD MADE such or such declarations. I am confirmed in this opinion by three reasons, 1. From having very diligently considered the passage itself as it stands in the ninth chapter of the third book of the Trialogus. 2. From observing that some of those who have thought differently, have probably never seen the Trialogus itself. The book is very scarce, and they do not refer to it, but only to certain extracts from it by Widefort, who was an enemy and gives them unfairly: And 3. by attending to Wickliff's sentiments as they are delivered in other parts of that work. In book the second, chapter the fourteenth, he says; "If you ask, what is the real cause of the eternal decrees of God before they are made, the answer is, the WILL OF GOD, or God HIMSELF: and again in the tenth chapter of the first book, where the author is treating particularly of the wisdom and power of God, he expressly affirms, that the divine energy acts with the most perfect freedom, though the effects produced by it must necessarily happen. "Quantum ad libertatem divinæ potentiæ, patet quod est summè libera, et tamen quicquid facit, necessario eveniat."

"That the supreme Being acts in the most exact conformity to his own decrees is a truth which scripture again and again asserts; but that HE was and is absolutely free in decreeing, is no less asserted by the inspired writers; who with one voice declare that the disposals and appointments of the Almighty do not depend on any antecedent and fatal necessity, but on his own free choice directed by infinite wisdom." If Wickliff could be shown to go further than this, he ought not, I think, to be defended.

Thomas Netter, commonly called Thomas of Walden, a learned roman catholic of the carmelite order, was one of the greatest adversaries of Wickliff. In his four folio volumes we find sixty dangerous, heretical,

articles enumerated against the English reformer. The following are among them.

1. That God gives no good things to his enemies.

2. That God is not more willing to reward the good than to punish the wicked.

3. That all things come to pass by fatal necessity.

4. That God could not make the world otherwise than it is made.

5. That God cannot do any thing which he doth not do.

6. That God cannot bring to pass that something should return into nothing.

In perusing the distinct and pious argumentations of Bradwardine, we every where meet with much entertainment and instruction. Not so, in traversing the abstruse, thorny, metaphysical, subtilities of Wickliff and his adversaries. No one need be surprised if some inconsistencies and even contradictions should be found in his writings. We have seen, that in himself he was not a very consistent character, whether we regard his words or his actions. Then his insight into christian truths was gradual; so that he may be expected not to hold the same language at different periods of his life. There can, however, be no doubt, but that he loved light and truth; and the real wonder is that in his circumstances he attained so much of them. Lastly, his writings have come down to us very imperfect; many of them are intirely lost, and we are obliged to take the accounts of his enemies. With no little need for patience I have examined Walden's evidence against him respecting the fatalism contained in the third, fourth, and fifth articles above mentioned; and am convinced that he misrepresents the sentiments of the excellent man, whom he so much disliked. Wickliff, on several occasions, for argument's sake, appears to grant that there would be a contradiction in supposing any thing to be producible, which God does not actually produce; but in one place he expressly informs us that it was an usual thing with him to guard concessions of that sort by

limiting them in such a manner that they should be no restraint on the divine will; every thing, according to him, is producible, WHICH GOD PLEASES TO PRODUCE. I know very well, says Wickliff, that in pretending to treat of the wisdom and power of God I am plunging into an ocean of difficulties, where I may be apt to prate concerning many things without having a good foundation for what I say. I know that it is a very hard matter to preserve the due course, especially as on many points I think differently from what I formerly did. However, as I was then ready to own my error, so I trust I always shall be, whenever I am shown that I have advanced any thing contrary to truth.*

If Thomas of Walden had properly attended to this candid concession, and honest protestation, which are to be found at a very little distance from the passages that he thought so objectionable, he would probably have treated Wickliff with less severity.

I cannot dismiss this head in better terms than those of a very useful memorialist,† who speaks of Wickliff, in substance as follows.

"I intend neither to deny, dissemble, defend, nor excuse any of his faults. We have this treasure, says the apostle, in EARTHEN vessels; and he that shall endeavour to prove a pitcher of clay to be a pot of gold, will take great pains to small purpose. Yea, should I be over officious to retain myself to plead for Wickliff's faults, that glorious saint would sooner chide than thank me. He was a man and so subject to error; he lived in a dark age, and was vexed with opposition; and it is therefore unreasonable that the constitution of his positive opinions should be GUESSED by his polemical heat, when he was chafed in disputation. Besides, envy has falsely fathered many foul aspersions upon him. What a pity it is that we have not his works to hear him speak in his own behalf! Were they all extant, we might know the occasion, inten-

* Lib. i. cap. 10. and iii. c. 8. † Fuller.

tion and connexion of what he spake, together with the limitations, restrictions, distinctions, and qualifications of what he maintained. There we might see what was overplus of passion, and what the just measure of his judgment. Many phrases, heretical in sound, would appear orthodox in sense. Some of his poisonous passages, dressed with due caution, would prove wholesome, and even cordial truths: many of his expressions wanting, not GRANUM PONDERIS, but SALIS, no weight of truth, but some grains of discretion. But alas! two hundred of his books are burnt; and we are fain to borrow the bare titles of them from his adversaries, who have winnowed his works, as Satan did Peter, not to find CORN, but CHAFF."

SICKNESS OF WICKLIFF. Page 104.

The prodigious exertions of Wickliff, and the harassing persecutions he underwent in 1378, are said to have been the occasion of a dangerous fit of sickness, which brought him almost to the point of death in the beginning of the year 1379. The mendicant friars hearing of this, immediately selected a committee of grave doctors, and instructed them in what they were to say to the sick man who had so grievously offended them. And that the message might be the more solemn, they joined with them four of the most respectable citizens, whom they termed aldermen of the wards. These commissioners found Wickliff lying in his bed; and they are said first of all to have wished him health, and a recovery from his distemper. After some time they put him in mind of the many and great injuries which he had done to the begging friars by his sermons and writings, and exhorted him, that as he had now very little time to live, he would, like a true penitent, bewail and revoke, in their presence, whatever things he had said to their disparagement. But Dr. Wickliff, immediately recovering strength, called his servants to him, and ordered them to raise him a little on his pillows. Which when they had done, he said with a loud voice, "I SHALL NOT DIE,

BUT LIVE AND DECLARE THE EVIL DEEDS OF THE FRIARS. On which the doctors, and the other deputies departed from him in no little confusion.*

ANECDOTES RELATIVE TO WICKLIFF.

S. Sudbury, archbishop of Canterbury, was murdered in the insurrection by Wat Tyler; and was succeeded in the primacy by William Courtney,† who had always shown himself one of Wickliff's most active adversaries. The new archbishop highly approved of the proceedings of the university of Oxford, mentioned in page 113; and he determined to use all the authority of his high office to crush Wickliff and his followers. He was not duly invested with the consecrated pall from Rome, till the sixth of May, 1382; and on the seventeenth of the same month he called together a court of select bishops and doctors.

The memorandum‡ in the archbishop's register states, that the court having met in the monastery of the friars' preachers, certain conclusions repugnant to the determinations of the church were laid before them; and that after good deliberation, they met again, and pronounced ten of the conclusions heretical, and fourteen erroneous and repugnant to the church.

It does not appear by the records that Wickliff himself was cited to appear before the archbishop; only the names of a few persons who espoused his opinions are mentioned. Wickliff is said to have claimed the privilege of being exempted from episcopal jurisdiction, on the ground of being a member of the university, and holding an office therein.

There cannot be the smallest doubt but that these proceedings were levelled chiefly at the obnoxious reformer. But till with my own eyes I read the seventh heretical article in the page above referred to in Wilkins' Concilia, I could scarce believe it possible that one of the charges against either Wickliff or his followers, should be, Deus debet obedire diabolo,

* Bale, Appendix, p. 469. † A. D. 1381. ‡ Wilkins, vol. iii. p. 157.

"God ought to obey the devil." This single fact shows to what a length calumny and credulity may go, when men are heated by passion and prejudice.

However, such violence and misrepresentation served but in the end to promote the cause of truth. Wickliff defended his opinions with spirit, took particular notice of this charge, and gained many new friends. "Such things," says he, "do they invent of catholic men that they may blacken their reputation, as if they held this impious opinion, that God is a devil; or any other open heretical tenet; and they are prepared by false and slanderous witnesses to fix such heresies on good men as if they had invented them."*

An extraordinary, but well authenticated circumstance proves the ability and address of Courtney. At the instant when the extracts from the writings of Wickliff were produced, and the court was going to enter upon business on the seventeenth of May, a violent earthquake shook the monastery. The affrighted bishops and doctors threw down their papers, and cried out, "the business is displeasing to God." The firm and intrepid archbishop, coolly and quietly chid their superstitious fears; and with great promptitude gave the matter a different turn. "If this earthquake," said he, "means any thing, it portends the downfal of heresy. For as noxious vapors are confined in the bowels of the earth, and are expelled by these violent concussions, so through our strenuous endeavours the kingdom must be purified from the pestilential opinions of reprobate men. But this is not to be done without great commotion."†

Wickliff in his writings often alluded to this accident, calling it the council of the herydene, which is the old English word for earthquake.

When the archbishop and his court had condemned Wickliff's doctrines, and had finished the business for which they had met together, a sermon was preached at the church of the gray friars by John Cunningham,

* MS. Bodl. † MS. Bodl. & Chron. Mon. Alban.

a distinguished adversary of Wickliff. At this sermon we are told there was present among others a knight named Cornelius Cloune, who was a great favourer of the conclusions then condemned, and one of those who held and taught them; nor would he believe otherwise of the sacrament than that the real and true bread was present, according to Wickliff's opinion.

The next day, being the vigil of the holy Trinity, the knight went to the same convent to hear mass. Behold! at the breaking of the host, upon casting his eye towards the friar who happened to celebrate mass, he saw in his hands, very flesh, raw and bloody, and divided into three parts. Full of wonder and amazement, he called his squire that he might see it; but the squire saw nothing more than usual. Moreover, in the middle of the third piece, which was to be put into the chalice, the knight saw this name JESUS written in letters of flesh, all raw and bloody; which was very wonderful to behold. On the next day, namely, the feast of the holy Trinity, the same friar, preaching at Paul's cross, told this story to all the people, and the knight attested the truth of it, and promised that he would fight and die in that cause; for that in the sacrament of the altar there was the very body of Christ, and not bread only as he had formerly believed.*

Such were the artifices of those who, at that time, zealously defended the popish doctrines.

I have taken much pains to reconcile the inconsistencies and obscurities which are to be found in the accounts of the latter part of Wickliff's life. Even in consulting such authorities as Spelman, and Wilkins, I find erroneous and contradictory dates of one of the most material original records. I believe the following brief account does not differ essentially from the truth.

In the former part of the summer of 1381, Dr. Barton, the vicechancellor, or chancellor, as he is called in the instrument of the university of Oxford, ap

* Knyghton de Event. Angl. 2651.

peared in the public schools while Dr. Wickliff was sitting in the chair; and, with the unanimous consent of twelve doctors his assessors, pronounced the professor's doctrines respecting the sacrament, heretical.

Wickliff, upon the first hearing of this sentence, is said to have been put to some confusion; but he soon recovered himself, and told the vicechancellor, that neither he nor his assistants, could confute the opinions they had ventured to condemn.

From this sentence the professor appealed to king Richard; but the duke of Lancaster, who in the manuscripts is styled a wise counsellor and a faithful son of the sacred church, came expressly to Oxford, and, as is hinted in page 114 of this volume, ordered Wickliff to harangue no more on that subject.* But he did not choose to obey.

At length, Courtney, a more active and determined primate than his predecessor Sudbury, finding that neither the strong measures which had been taken at Oxford, nor his own subsequent proceedings at the earthquake council, availed to the silencing of the audacious heretic, devised the following expedients, which enabled him at least to rid the university of the man whose person had hitherto been sheltered under academical immunities.

1. He obtained the king's patent, empowering the archbishop and his suffragans to arrest and imprison all persons who privately or publicly should maintain the heresies in question.

2. He also obtained the king's patent directed to the chancellor and proctors at Oxford, appointing them inquisitors general, and ordering them to banish and expel from the university and town of Oxford all who were advocates of Wickliff's heresies, and even all who should dare to receive into their inns or houses Wickliff himself, or any other of his friends, suspected of the like.†

From this storm Wickliff thought proper to retire,

* Wilkins, vol. iii. p. 171. † Ibid. p. 156 & 166.

and the haughty archbishop had the satisfaction of seeing the man he so much disliked, compelled to retreat before his power, to Lutterworth, an obscure part of the kingdom.

DEATH OF WICKLIFF. Page 109.

I have followed Mosheim in the history, who says that this event took place in the year 1387. On more accurate inquiry, I find that soon after his removal to his parsonage, he was seized with the palsy, from which, however, he recovered so as to resume his studies and pastoral exertions. It was, I believe, on the 28th of December, 1384, when he was attending divine service, in his church at Lutterworth, that he was attacked by a second and fatal stroke of the palsy. His tongue in particular was so much affected, that he never spoke again.

The bigoted papists gloried in his death, and one of them has insulted his memory unmercifully. "It was reported," says Walsingham, "that he had prepared accusations and blasphemies, which he had intended on the day he was taken ill, to have uttered in his pulpit against Thomas a Becket, the saint and martyr of the day; but by the judgment of God he was suddenly struck, and the palsy seized his limbs; and that mouth, which was to have spoken huge things against God, and his saint, and the holy church, was miserably drawn aside and afforded a frightful spectacle to the beholders. His tongue was speechless, and his head shook, showing plainly that the curse of God was upon him."

The reader will be beforehand with me in any remarks I could make on this account.

It was in the year 1415 that the council of Constance declared that Wickliff had died an obstinate heretic; and ordered his bones, if they could be distinguished from the bones of the faithful, to be dug up and thrown upon a dunghil. This sentence was not executed till thirteen years after, when orders for that purpose were sent by pope Martin V. to R.

Fleming, bishop of Lincoln and diocesan of Lutterworth. Accordingly, the bishop's officers took the bones out of the grave, where they had lain undisturbed forty-four years, burnt them, and cast the remaining ashes into an adjoining brook.*

Among the forty-five articles of Wickliff's doctrines† condemned at Constance in 1415, I observe the sixth to be the very same with that which stands the seventh among those pronounced heretical by Courtney and his council in 1382. "God ought to obey the devil." I have allowed in general that the council of Constance did not misrepresent the opinions of Wickliff. But this article certainly ought to be excepted; and a diligent examination, were it worth while, might probably discover others in the same predicament.

TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE. Page 109.

Wickliff, in one place, defines the CHURCH to be the congregation of just men for whom Christ shed his blood. And in others he speaks thus: "Scripture is the faith of the church, and the more it is known in an orthodox sense, the better; therefore as secular men ought to know the faith, the divine word is to be taught them in whatever language is best known to them. The truth of the faith is clearer and more exact in the scripture than the priests know how to express it; and if one may say so, there are many prelates who are ignorant of scripture, and others who conceal things contained in it. It seems useful therefore that the faithful should themselves search and discover the sense of the faith by having the scriptures in a language which they know and understand. Christ and his apostles converted men by making known to them the scriptures in that language which was familiar to them. Why then ought not the modern disciples of Christ to collect fragments from the loaf; and, as they did, clearly open the scriptures to the people that they may

* L'Enfant, 231. Fuller, 171. † P. 199 of this vol.

know them? The apostle teaches, that we must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ, and be answerable for all the goods intrusted to us; it is necessary therefore the faithful should know these goods and the use of them, that they may give a proper answer. For the answer by a prelate or an attorney will not THEN avail, but every one MUST answer in his OWN person."*

And in this manner did our zealous reformer argue for the propriety of a translation of the bible into the English language.

In his prologue to the translation, he informs us of the method in which he proceeded, notwithstanding the opposition he met with, and the clamors that were raised against him on the account. 1. He, with several who assisted him, got together all the Latin bibles they could, which they diligently collated and corrected, in order that they might have one Latin bible near the truth. In the next place they collected the ordinary comments, with which they studied the text so as to make themselves masters of its sense and meaning. Lastly they consulted the old grammarians and ancient divines respecting the hard words and sentences. After all this was done, Wickliff then set about the translation, which, he resolved, should NOT be a literal one, but so as to express the meaning as clearly as he could.

A specimen or two of Wickliff's new testament, in the old English of his time, may not be displeasing to the reader.

"Matth. xi. 25, 26. In thilke tyme Jhesus answeride & seid, I knowleche to thee, Fadir, Lord of Hevene & of earthe, for thou hast hid these thingis fro wise men and redy, & hast schewid hem to litil children. So, Fadir; for so it was plesynge to fore thee.

"John x. 26—30. Ye bȩleven not, for ye ben not of my scheep. My scheep heren my vois, and I knowe hem, and thei suen me. And I gyve to hem everlas-

* Great Sentence. Spec. Secul. Doctr. Christ.

tynge life, & thei schulen not perische, withouten end; & noon schal rauysche hem fro myn hond. That thing that my Fadir gaf to me, is more than alle thingis: & no man may rauysche from my Fadris hond. I & the Fadir ben oon.

" Rom. ix. 12. It was seid to him, that the more schulde serve the lesse: as it is writun, I louyde Jacob, but I hatide Esau. What therefore schulen we seie? wher wickidnesse be anentis God? God forbede. For he seith to Moises, I schal have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I schal ghyve mercy on whom I have mercy. Therefore, it is not neither of man willynge, neither rennynge; but of God hauynge mercy. And the scripture seith to Farao, For to this thing have I styrrid thee, that I schewe in thee my vertu, and that my name be teeld in all erthe. Therefore, of whom God wole, he hath mercy: & whom he wole, he endurith. Thanne seith thou to me, what is sought ghit, for who withstondith his will? Oo man, what art thou that answerist to God! Wher a maad thing seith to him that made it, What hast thou maad me so? Wher a pottere of cley hath not power to make, of the same gobet, oo vessel into onour, a nothir into dispyt!"*

LOLLARDS.

PERSECUTION for reading the scriptures in English. P. 169.

In this page are briefly mentioned the grievous persecutions by bishop Langland or Longland. Mr. Collier in his Ecclesiastical History, after allowing that several abjured, and that six actually suffered, observes, that these men were accused for reading the new testament in English; and why, says he, was this so great a crime? Because it was WICKLIFF'S translation and condemned by the church. The English clergy did not believe this translator had reached the original, and rightly expressed the mind of the Holyghost. . . . .

* N. B. This being a passage frequently quoted in controversy, it is supposed, that very particular pains were taken with it by the translator.

They were careful to prevent the spreading of lollardism, and we need not wonder..... P. 11. vol. ii. Collier.

It is quite painful to see so valuable a writer undertake to speak thus in mitigation of the abominable cruelties of the papists in those times.

Further; he does not believe that "six men and a woman were burnt at Coventry for teaching their children the Lord's prayer, the ten commandments, and the creed in the vulgar tongue;" and he expresses a hope that bishop Burnet, who mentions the fact in his History of the Reformation, was misinformed. "The learned historian," says he, "cites Fox for his authority. But this looks like a lame story, for Fox cites no other authority than one Mother Hall."*

On reading the above I was curious to see what Fox actually DOES SAY: and here I shall transcribe his very words without making any observation on them. "The WITNESSES of this history," says he, "be yet alive, which both SAW THEM and KNEW THEM. OF WHOM ONE is mother Hall, dwelling NOW in Baginton, two miles from Coventry. By whom also this is testified of them, that they above all other in Coventry pretended most show and worship of devotion at the holding up of the sacrament; whether to colour the matter or no, it is not known."†

Mr. Fox speaks of the zeal of the holy men in those times of persecution in the most glowing terms; "To see their travels, their earnest seeking, their burning zeal, their readings, watchings, their sweet assemblies, their love and concord, their godly living, their faithful marrying with the faithful, may make us now in these our days of free profession to blush for shame." P. 23. Vol. II. Fox.

* The same. † Fox, vol. ii. p. 182.

COUNCIL OF CONSTANCE. P. 175—243.

JOHN HUSS, AND JEROM OF PRAGUE.

Learned men of a speculative turn, and of the most impartial and dispassionate temper, have been puzzled to account for the treatment these good men met with from the council of Constance. Jerom suffered as an associate and supporter of Huss; and in regard to the latter, the sentence of the council is express, that he was a notorious, scandalous, obstinate, incorrigible, heretic. L'Enfant, after a most careful and judicious review of all the circumstances relative to this sentence, is decidedly of opinion that the accusers failed in making out their charges; and that the council therefore were not justified in passing so severe and cruel a sentence. There is no doubt that both Huss and Jerom were victims to the rage and injustice of their unrelenting enemies. But still, in public transactions, even the most abandoned of mankind do not usually lay aside all regard to principles or to the judgment of others.

Several motives, not openly avowed by the council, have been supposed to influence their minds in the condemnation of John Huss.

1. He always refused to subscribe to the condemnation of Wickliff; and, on many occasions, he had spoken of him as of a holy man. And though he did not agree with the English reformer respecting the eucharist, he appears to have been a thorough wickliffite in all those matters which related to the prevailing abuses of ecclesiastical power. Hence it is easy to understand how obnoxious he must have been to corrupt pontiffs and cardinals; and in general, to ambitious and domineering dignitaries of the established hierarchy. L'Enfant speaks out when he says "the SOUNDEST part of the council of Constance were not materially different from so many wickliffites and hussites." The sound part, however, it is to be feared, was but a small part of the whole; and every one must see that by far the greater part of that assembly would

concur in thinking it high time to silence a man who was continually exclaiming against the tyranny and irregularities of the clergy.

2. John Huss, by his sermons, his writings and his conversation, had CERTAINLY contributed to render the clergy of Bohemia odious and contemptible in the eyes of the people. The bishops, therefore, together with the sacerdotal and monastic orders, were sensible that their honours and advantages, their credit and authority would be in the greatest danger, if this zealous reformer should be allowed to return into his own country, and declaim with his usual freedom. The true cause of the commotions, which existed in Bohemia, is allowed by all the authors of that time, without a single exception, to have been the scandalous conduct of the popes, the subversion of discipline, and the intire corruption of the whole ecclesiastical state. A complete reformation therefore was the only adequate remedy. But this, as the event proved, was not to be expected from a corrupt hierarchy. It was far more probable that the indignant interested ecclesiastics should unite to accomplish the ruin of the man who exposed their ambition, tyranny, and avarice. For this very purpose, we are told, the wicked clergy of Bohemia and Moravia, and especially the bishops and abbots, combined together, and even contributed sums of money to be employed in procuring the condemnation and death of Huss; and all this, because they could not bear his faithful honest advice and admonition, and because he detected their abominable pride, simony, avarice, and debauchery.*

3. That some persons of the greatest weight in the council were actually influenced by these motives, is not a matter of mere conjecture. L'Enfant has given us the very words, in Latin, spoken by the emperor to the council, after the examination of Huss. The translation of them is as follows:

" You have heard the articles laid to the charge of

* L'Enfant. Mosheim. Diar. Hussit.

John Huss. They are grievous, numerous, and proved not only by credible witnesses, but by his own confes sion. In my opinion, there is not a single one among them which does not call for the punishment of fire. If therefore he do not retract all, I am for having him burnt. And even though he should obey the council, I am of opinion, that he should be forbid to preach and instruct, or ever to set foot again in the kingdom of Bohemia. For if he be suffered to preach, and especially in Bohemia where he has a strong party, he will not fail to return to his natural bent, and even to sow new errors worse than the former. Moreover, I am of opinion, that the condemnation of his errors in Bohemia, ought to be sent to my brother the king of Bohemia, to Poland and to other countries where this doctrine prevails, with orders to cause all those who shall continue to believe and teach it, to be punished by the ecclesiastical authority and by the secular arm jointly. There is no remedy for this evil, but by thus cutting the branches as well as pulling up the root. Moreover, it is absolutely necessary that the bishops and other prelates, who have laboured here for the extirpation of this heresy, be recommended by the suffrages of the whole council to their sovereigns. Lastly, says the emperor, if there are any of John Huss's friends here at Constance, they ought to be restrained with all due severity, but especially his disciple Jerom." Whereupon some said that Jerom of Prague might perhaps be brought to reason by the punishment of his MASTER.

This lays open the true reason of that treatment, p. 213, which Huss was to have experienced in case he had retracted. The council dreaded his return in Bohemia. Even in the iniquitous sentence which they passed against him, they had the incautious effrontery to declare John Huss not a true preacher of the gospel of Christ according to the exposition of holy doctors, but rather one who in his public discourses seduced the christian people of Bohemia BY HIS COMPILATIONS from the SCRIPTURES.*

* Vid. Fasicul. rer. Sententia defin contra Huss. p. 302.

4. It is a lamentable truth that, in those days the disputes concerning the most abstract metaphysical subtilities were carried to such a height by the contending parties as to produce the greatest bitterness and animosity. Huss was attached to the party of the REALISTS as they were then called; and opposed with great warmth his adversaries the NOMINALISTS. This circumstance is supposed to have contributed not a little to the unhappy fate of this pious Bohemian. For the tribunal at Constance was principally composed of nominalists, with the famous John Gerson at their head, who was the zealous patron of the faction and the mortal enemy of Huss. In the report which the popish writers sent to the king of France respecting the transactions at Constance, there is the following passage, "God raised up the catholic doctors Peter Allyaco and John Gerson, and many other learned NOMINALISTS, who disputed, during forty days, at the council of Constance, with the heretics Jerom and John Huss, and vanquished them."*

Happy would it have been if these opposite sects of philosophers had confined themselves within the bounds of reason and argument, or even of mutual invectives; but they were accustomed to accuse each other of heresy and impiety, and had constantly recourse to penal laws and corporal punishments. Thus the leading NOMINALISTS at Constance looked on themselves as personally offended with Huss, and would be satisfied with nothing short of the death of their powerful adversary. On the other hand, in 1479, the realists had sufficient weight and influence to procure the condemnation of John de Wesalia, a nominalist, of whose sufferings we shall presently give a brief account.†

It is needless to detain the reader with a minute detail of the distinctions between the realists and nominalists. Their principal point of contention seems to have been the existence or nonexistence of abstract

* Baluz. Miscell. tom. iv. p. 534. † P. 411. of this volume.

or universal ideas. Strange infatuation! that a difference of opinion in such abstruse and obscure subjects as these should ever have been supposed to amount to the sin against the Holyghost, or to a mortal offence against God, the christian religion, justice, and the commonwealth. "Can this blindness proceed from any other cause than the influence of Satan, who diverts us from good things and makes us apply to vain speculations, which neither inspire us with devotion towards God, nor with love and charity towards our neighbour." Such is the fine reflection of the anonymous author of the examination of John de Wesalia.*

The angry disputations of these discordant sects continued till the appearance of Luther, who, by introducing more important subjects, soon put an end to the mutual wranglings of the scholastic divines.

There is a tradition, that John Huss, alluding to his own name which signifies a goose, predicted before his judges the reformation by Luther in the following terms. "This day ye roast a goose, but a hundred years hence a white swan will come which ye will never be able to put to death." This pretended prophecy, like many others, was probably made after the event.

L'Enfant mentions several medals which appear to have been struck for the purpose of commemorating the virtues of Huss. Two were preserved at Magdeburg, which have on one side the image of John Huss with his beard and mitre, with a book in his right hand, which Luther in a priest's habit, bareheaded and clasping the bible with both hands, looks on with pleasure. A third was in the private cabinet of a German count. On one side it represents Huss, with these words, Sola Deo acceptos nos facit esse fides; faith alone renders us acceptable to God; and on the other side Luther with these words, Pestis eram vivus; moriens ero mors tua, papa; I was a plague to thee, O pope, whilst living, and will be thy death when I die.

* Fascicul. rer. exp.

The encomium passed by the same very impartial historian, on the private letters of Huss, is well worthy of notice.

"There is not a papist nor a protestant, I will venture to say, not a Turk, nor a pagan, who notwithstanding the hasty expressions dropped now and then in his letters, does not admire them for the dignity and piety of his sentiments, the tenderness of his conscience, his charity towards his enemies, his affection and fidelity to his friends, his gratitude to his benefactors, and above all his constancy of mind, accompanied with the most extraordinary modesty and humility."

After all, a very learned and profound ecclesiastical historian admits that there did appear in the conduct of HUSS ONE MARK OF HERESY, which according to the maxims of the age, might expose him to condemnation with some appearance of justice; namely, HIS INFLEXIBLE OBSTINACY; which the church of Rome always considered as a grievous heresy, even in those whose errors were of little moment.* Huss refused to abjure his errors; and in so doing he resisted that council which was supposed to represent the catholic church. Moreover he intimated with sufficient plainness that the church was fallible. All this was, certainly, highly criminal and intolerably heretical. For it became a dutiful son of the church to submit, without any exception, his own judgment to the judgment of his holy mother, and to believe firmly in her infallibility. The Roman church for many years had observed the rule of Pliny;† "in case of obstinate perseverance, I ordered them to be executed. For of this I had no doubt, that a sullen and obstinate inflexibility called for the vengeance of the magistrate." The discerning reader will determine for himself, how far Dr. Mosheim, in making these observations, is to be considered as speaking ironically.

* Mosh. Historia Eccl. p. 616. not. (a).
† Page 167. vol. i. edit. 2. of this history.

JOHN DE WESALIA, Page 256,

Was a doctor of divinity of the fifteenth century. He might have been mentioned, p. 256, after Bernardin.

1. He taught doctrines which much displeased the catholics.

2. The archbishop of Mentz prosecuted him. John was imprisoned, and an assembly of popish doctors were convened to sit in judgment upon him in 1479.

3. He made a public recantation of his doctrines; but nevertheless was condemned to a perpetual penance in a monastery of the augustin friars, where he died soon after.

The protestants have certainly ranked him in the catalogue of the witnesses to the truth; but there may be a question whether his principles and his practice, taken together, entitle him to a place in this history. Very little is known concerning him, except from his examination before the German inquisitors, who most undoubtedly treated him with great harshness and severity.

By one author he appears to have been considered as an eminent christian; but this is the judgment of a person who shows himself on all occasions extremely attached to calvinistic tenets, and who has no mercy on arminians. And, if for the sake of brevity, I may be allowed the use of the words calvinist and arminian, as being terms well understood at this day, John de Wesalia was certainly a most rigid calvinist.

A long catalogue of charges were brought against him, from which it may be proper to select a few for the reader's perusal.

1. From everlasting, God hath written a book wherein he hath inscribed all his elect; and whosoever is not already written there, will never be written there at all. Moreover,

2. He that is written therein will never be blotted out.

3. The elect are saved by the grace of God alone: and what man soever God willeth to save, by induing him with grace, if all the priests in the world were desirous to damn and excommunicate that man, he would still be saved. Whomsoever likewise God willeth to damn, he would still be damned, though the presbyters, the pope and others were willing to save him.

4. If there had never been any pope in the world, they who are saved, would have been saved. The pope, and bishops and priests contribute nothing to salvation: concord alone, and peace among men, and a peaceable way of living are sufficient.

5. Christ never appointed any particular fasts, nor forbade the use of flesh meat on any day.

6. If St. Peter appointed fasts, perhaps he did so for the purpose of having a better sale for his fish.

7. The holy oil is the very same as the oil which you eat at home.

8. The scriptures do not say that the holy Spirit proceeds from the Son.

9. Those who undertake pilgrimages to Rome are fools.

10. I consider nothing as sinful, which the scriptures have not declared to be so.

11. I despise the pope and his councils. I love Christ; and may his word dwell in us abundantly!

12. It is a difficult thing to be a christian.

13. Indulgences are nothing.

It was further objected to him in the course of his examination, that he had given it as his opinion, that St. Paul contributed nothing towards his conversion by his own freewill.

This account might lead us to suspect, that there was something of a spirit of levity in the disposition of John de Wesalia. He seems to have seen clearly through several of the popish superstitions, and to have exposed them with zeal and freedom. Charity

will certainly incline us to hope the best; nevertheless the christian reader cannot but wish there had been greater marks of personal contrition of soul, and of true humility at the cross of Christ. However, it ought not to be omitted, that John was an old man and bowed down with infirmities and disorders of long standing; and therefore he was probably not able to recollect what he had formerly advanced, or to express his thoughts distinctly before such a formidable tribunal of inquisitors. Fear compelled him at last to retract; but in the course of his trial, he had the spirit to say to the court, "If Christ were now present, and ye were to treat him as ye do me, HE might be condemned by you as a heretic. However," (the old man added with a smile,) "HE would get the better of you by his acuteness."*

LUTHER. Page 273—296.

Though this chapter contains the most material circumstances relative to the earlier part of Luther's life, the reader may not be displeased to peruse the following passages, the substance of which is taken from the preface to the second volume of Luther's works. This preface is sometimes called the life of Luther, and is particularly valuable, because it was written by the pious Melancthon after Luther's decease, and because it is wanting in some of the copies of the Wittemberg Latin editions.†

The excellent writer begins thus:

The rev. Martin Luther had given reason to hope, that in the preface to this part of his writings he would have favoured us with some account of his own life, and of the occasion of those contests in which he was so much concerned. And no doubt he would have done so, if, before this volume was printed, he had

* Fascic. rer. vol. i. & Bayle. Crit. Dict.

† It has been published separately; but it is not easy to be met with.

not been called from the present mortal life, to the eternal enjoyment of God and the heavenly church. A luminous review of his private life would have been peculiarly useful: the narrative must have been full of lessons for the admonition of posterity, and also full of examples for the encouragement of piety: moreover it would have confuted the slanderous fictions of his enemies; who insinuate, that he was stirred up by princes or others to undermine the dignity of bishops, or that he was induced, through the violence of private ambition, to break the bonds of monastic slavery.

It were much to be wished that such a narrative had been executed by himself with a copiousness of detail. For though the malevolent might have objected, that the author was trumpeting his own praise, we know very well, that HE was too grave a character, to have allowed the smallest deviation from truth. Besides, as many good and wise men are yet alive, who, he must have known, were well acquainted with all the transactions,—to have devised falsehoods under such circumstances must have been perfectly ridiculous.

I now proceed to recite, with the strictest regard to truth, such matters relative to his life, as I either actually saw or was told of by himself.

The parents of Luther took especial care in their daily instructions to educate their son in the knowledge and fear of God, and in a sense of his duty. The youth soon displayed very great talents, and particularly in an inclination to eloquence. With great ease he surpassed his schoolfellows in copiousness of language, both in prose and verse; and if he had been so fortunate as to have met with suitable teachers, his great capacity would have enabled him to go through all the sciences; neither is it improbable but the milder studies of a sound philosophy and a careful habit of elaborate composition might have been useful in moderating the vehemence of his natural temper: but at Erfurt he was introduced to the dry, thorny logic of

the age; and his penetrating genius quickly made him master of all that was valuable in that subject.

His capacious mind, eager for knowledge, was not content with this. He proceeded to Cicero, Virgil, Livy, and the rest. Nor did he read these authors, as boys do, for the sake of the words, but for the instruction they furnish. He entered into the spirit of the writers; and as his memory was in an extraordinary degree tenacious, almost every thing he had read, was at hand for practice. Hence the superior genius of Luther became the admiration of the whole university.

His parents had intended these great powers of eloquence, and this vast strength of genius, to be employed in public business for the advantage of the state; but Luther, contrary to their judgment, suddenly left the study of the law, and entered the augustin monastery at Erfurt. There he not only gave the closest attention to ecclesiastical learning, but also personally submitted to the severest discipline. He far exceeded every one in all kinds of religious exercises, in reading, in arguing, in fasting, in praying. And as he was neither a little, nor a weak man, I have often been astonished to observe how little meat or drink he seemed to require. I have seen him, when he was in perfect health, absolutely neither eat nor drink during four days together; at other times I have seen him, for many days be content with the slight allowance of a very little bread and a herring on each day.

The immediate occasion of his commencing that course of life which he judged most adapted to sacred duties and the promotion of piety, was this, as he himself told me, and as many persons well knew. While he was deeply reflecting on the astonishing instances of the divine vengeance, so great alarm would suddenly affect his whole frame, as almost to frighten him to death. I was once present, when through intense exertion of mind in the course of an argument respecting some point of doctrine, he was so terrified, as to retire to a neighbour's chamber, place himself on the bed, and pray aloud, frequently repeating these words,

"He hath concluded all under sin, that he might have mercy upon all." These alarming agitations came upon him either for the first time, or, certainly, they were the severest in that year when he lost an intimate companion, who was killed, but I know not by what accident.

It was not, therefore, poverty, but the love of a pious life, which induced Luther to enter the monastery. And as this was his grand object, he was not content with the usual scholastic learning, though his proficiency in it was surprising. He was not in quest of fame, but of religious improvement. He soon comprehended the subtile processes of the schools, but his heart was not in those things. The fountains of SACRED AND HEAVENLY LEARNING, that is, the writings of the prophets and the apostles, were more suited to his taste; and these he studied with the greatest avidity. The anxieties and terrors above mentioned had increased this turn of mind. He wished to know the WILL OF GOD, to build his faith on the firmest foundations, and to cultivate an habitual reverence for the divine commands.

He used to say, that an elderly priest in the monastery, to whom he had opened the distresses of his conscience, had been of great use to him, by his discourses on the nature of faith, and by drawing his attention to that expression in the creed, "I believe in the remission of sins." The elderly priest interpreted this article as implying not merely a GENERAL BELIEF, for the devils had a faith of that sort, but, that it was the command of God that each particular person should apply this doctrine of the remission of sins to his own particular case: and this interpretation, he said, was confirmed by a reference to a passage of St. Bernard, in one of his sermons, who maintains the same sentiment, and also produces the apostle Paul in support of the doctrine of free justification by faith.

This conversation proved a great comfort to the mind of Luther. He was led to attend to St. Paul's doctrine of justification by faith, which is so often in-

culcated by that apostle. By reading and comparing together different parts of the old and new testament, and by an increased dependence on God in daily prayer, he gradually acquired more light, and saw the emptiness of the usual interpretations of scripture.

He then began to read the works of Augustin, where he found many decisive passages which confirmed his idea of faith, and gave him much satisfaction. He read other divines, but stuck close to Augustin.

Frederic, the elector of Saxony, heard him preach; and much admired the excellent matter of his sermons, as well as the nervous language and genius of the preacher.*

Afterwards Luther undertook to expound the psalms and the epistle to the Romans. He showed the difference between the law and the gospel: he refuted the ancient pharisaical error, at that time prevalent both in the schools and the pulpit, that men by their own works may merit the remission of their sins, and be accounted righteous before God. Thus he recalled men's minds to the office of the Son of God; and, like John the Baptist, showed them the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world. Moreover, he taught them, that remission of their sins is freely for Christ's sake, and that this benefit is to be received by faith.

This revival of most excellent doctrine procured him a great and extensive authority; especially as the LIFE of the man harmonized with his professions. His language was not merely that of the lips, but proceeded from the heart. The proverb was remarkably verified in this case: "The pious conduct of a man maketh his speech persuasive." It was this circumstance, namely, the sanctity of his life, that induced some excellent characters to comply with the plans which he afterwards proposed of changing certain established ceremonies.

* Page 277.

Not that Luther, at this time, meditated the smallest innovation on the customary observances. On the contrary, he was a most rigid disciplinarian; and had broached nothing to alarm. But he was illustrating more and more those doctrines of which ALL stand in need, the doctrines of repentance, remission of sins, faith, and the true consolations of the cross. Pious christians were delighted with these things; and even learned men were much pleased to see Christ, the prophets, and the apostles, brought, as it were, out of darkness and prison; and to hear of the difference between law and gospel, and their promises, and between philosophy and the word of God; concerning which important matters, not a line was to be found in Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus, and such like. Add to this, the writings of Erasmus proved great incitements to the cultivation of the Greek and Latin languages. Luther himself diligently studied Hebrew and Greek for the purpose of obtaining a more perfect knowledge of the scriptures.

Such were the employments of Luther at the time when those prostitute indulgences were first proclaimed by that most impudent dominican Tetzel. Burning with the love of every thing that was godly, and irritated by Tetzel's shameful discourses, he published some propositions concerning the nature of indulgences. The dominican, in return, publicly burnt Luther's propositions, and menaced the heretic himself with the flames. In a word, the outrageous conduct of Tetzel and his associates absolutely compelled Luther to discuss the subject at length, in support of the cause of truth.

In this manner began the controversy between the reformers and the papists. As yet Luther never dreamt of changing any one of the rites of the church, nor even of intirely rejecting indulgences. They, therefore, charge him falsely, who say that he made use of the affair of the indulgences as a plausible pretext for subverting the establishment, or for increasing either his own power or that of others.

Frederic of Saxony, in particular, conducted himself agreeably to the known character of that prince. He neither incited nor applauded Luther: he was ever distinguished as a lover of peace; and it was with a painful concern that he beheld the prospect of still greater dissensions.

But he was a wise man, and was influenced not merely by worldly maxims, which always direct us to crush as quickly as possible the slightest beginnings of every innovation: he reverenced the DIVINE commands, which enjoin attention to the gospel, and forbid an obstinate resistance to the truth. Thus this prince submitted to God, read his word with diligence, and never discouraged whatever his judgment pointed out to him as sound doctrine. Moreover, I know that he often asked wise and learned men to give him their sentiments freely on the disputed points; and in particular at Cologne he besought Erasmus to open his mind to him respecting the controversies in which Luther was engaged. There Erasmus spoke without disguise: "The man is right; but there is a want of mildness in him."*

On this head duke Frederic afterwards wrote to Luther, and exhorted him in the most serious manner, to moderate the asperity of his style.

It is also well known that Luther promised cardinal Cajetan to be silent, provided his adversaries were also enjoined silence. From which it most clearly appears that he had, at that time, formed no purpose of raising contests in the church, but wished for peace; till ignorant writers provoked him on all sides, and drew him into fresh disputes.

The grand question concerning the supremacy of the Roman see was raised by Eckius for the purpose of inflaming the hatred of the pope and of princes against Luther.

Our reformer, not only in the beginning of the contest, undertook the cause of truth, without the least

* Page 293

motive of private ambition, but also remained, throughout the course of it, always mindful of his own peculiar department; so that though he was naturally of an ardent and passionate temper, yet he constantly disclaimed the use of force, or of any other arms but those of argument and instruction. He wisely distinguished between things that were totally different in every way; for example, the duties of a bishop instructing the church of God, and of a magistrate holding the sword as a restraint on the licentious multitude.

Accordingly, when Satan, who loves to disgrace religion by the ruinous errors of poor miserable men, raised up several seditious characters to excite tumults and irregularities, Luther was ever the man to condemn such outrages in the strongest language; and, both by his precept and example, to adorn and strengthen the bonds of social order and polity. WHEN I SERIOUSLY REFLECT ON THIS MATTER, and consider how many great men in the church have failed in this very point, I do not hesitate to affirm distinctly, that no human care or diligence alone could have been equal to this effect; but that there must also have been a divine principle which illumined and directed his mind, and preserved him so constantly within the proper limits of his duty.

"Render unto Cesar the things that are Cesar's, and unto God the things that are God's," was his constant exhortation: in other words, worship God in true penitence and in an open avowal of the truth, in true prayer and in a conscientious discharge of duties: and obey with reverence and in the fear of God all the civil regulations of the community to which you belong. These were the very rules to which Luther himself adhered in his practice. He gave to God the things which are God's. He taught the truth, and he offered up his prayers to God on right principles; he likewise possessed the other virtues which are pleasing to God. Lastly, as a citizen, he avoided every thing that had the smallest tendency to sedition. These virtues rank so high in my estimation, that in this life, I think, greater accomplishments cannot be desired.

But while we praise the excellencies of the man who made so becoming a use of his heavenly gifts, it is our bounden duty to give particular thanks to God, that he hath been pleased, through Luther's means, to restore to us the light of the gospel; and it is also our duty to preserve and spread the doctrine which he taught. It is this doctrine which must guide our prayers, and even our whole lives. It is this doctrine, of which the Son of God says, "If any man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him."

In fact, a false philosophy, and the succeeding errors of Pelagius, had exceedingly corrupted the pure faith of the scriptures. St. Augustin was raised up by God to restore it in a measure; and I doubt not but if he could now judge of the controversies of the present age, he would be decidedly with us.

With my whole heart, I pray to the eternal God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that for his own and his Son's glory, he would collect together the eternal church by the voice of his gospel: and may he direct our wills by his holy Spirit, and preserve in its purity that doctrine which he hath revived among us through the ministry of Martin Luther!

The Son of God himself prayed, "Father, sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." To this prayer of our Highpriest we would add our own petitions, that true religion may ever shine among us and direct our lives. These were the daily prayers of Luther, and continued to be so till his soul was called from his mortal body, which took place without struggle in the sixty-third year of his age.

The reader has now before him the SUBSTANCE of a considerable part of Melancthon's account of Luther, written very soon after the death of that reformer. The known integrity, piety, and moderation of the writer render his preface to the second volume of Luther's works peculiarly valuable. An exact translation was deemed unnecessary. It was thought best

to condense the MATTER into as little room as possible, and not to interrupt the detail of the biographer by introducing any particulars from other authorities. The facts, which were already mentioned in the preceding history, are in general omitted in these extracts. A trifling repetition sometimes could not well be avoided, and will be excused by the indulgent reader, on account of the instructive remark or opinion which accompanies it. The positive judgment and declaration of Melancthon, whenever they can be had, respecting the circumstances or events in which he himself was immediately concerned, cannot fail to be instructive.

But in this instance, as in many others, it has unfortunately happened that those passages of this little tract, which are most deeply practical, and which peculiarly relate to Luther's penitential convictions, and to his progress in spiritual understanding, during the earlier years of his religious course, have been almost intirely overlooked by historians and memorialists. The consequence has been, that certain precious fragments of the secret thoughts and practice of the reformer, though authentic beyond all dispute, are scarcely known among protestants in general. The pious and enlightened reader of every denomination will, no doubt, be gratified in seeing them brought forward and recorded here.

MISCELLANEOUS OBSERVATIONS.

Melancthon, in another place, has given a very decided testimony to the talents of Luther.

"Pomeranus," says he, "is a grammarian, and explains the force of words; I profess logic, and teach both the management of the matter, and the nature of argumentation. Justus Jonas is an orator, and discourses with copiousness and elegance; but Luther is OMNIA IN OMNIBUS, complete in every thing; a very miracle among men; whatever he says, whatever he writes, penetrates their minds, and leaves the most astonishing stings in their hearts."

The same author assures us that he often found Luther at prayer, with vehemence and tears imploring God for the whole church. He daily set apart a portion of time for reading psalms, and for earnest supplication; and would often say, he was not pleased with those, who through indolence or a multiplicity of employment, contented themselves with mere sighs instead of actual prayers. Forms of prayer, he said, were prescribed to us by the will of God; that the reading of them might warm our affections, and that our voices might profess aloud the God whom we serve and implore.*

The religious student of ecclesiastical history naturally finds himself interested in every event where Luther is materially concerned. This does not arise from curiosity alone. Much light is often thrown on the characters of eminent men, from a knowledge of their conduct under peculiar or extraordinary circumstances, provided the facts be but stated with accuracy.

The various accounts of authors, respecting the immediate incidents, which determined Luther to retire from the world into a monastery,† agree in the main; but not precisely in every circumstance. It is very remarkable, that Melancthon, who speaks of the occasion of this sudden resolution, as a thing which was well known, and which he himself had heard Luther relate, is not only silent concerning any storm of thunder and lightning, but, as we have mentioned above, expressly says, he does not know by what accident Luther's companion was killed. The story of the thunder storm appears also to have had little weight on the mind of Melchior Adamus:‡ yet, from the very respectable evidence collected by Seckendorf and others, the most probable conclusion seems to be—

1. That Luther's companion was not killed by lightning, but murdered by some unknown person,

* Melch. Adam. † Page 247 of this vol.

‡ Who wrote the lives of the German divines who promoted the reformation.

who left him miserably bruised and wounded. His name is said to have been Alexius.

2. That Luther himself, while walking at a distance from house or town, was so alarmed by a storm of thunder, that he fell upon the ground, and in that situation made a sort of vow to lead a monastic life in future, if he should be delivered from the impending danger.

3. That he afterwards considered this vow as binding on his conscience, which was at that time in a remarkably tender state.

4. That soon after these events, which took place when he was about twenty one years of age, he called together his particular friends and fellow students, and entertained them in his usual way with music and a convivial treat; and when they had not the smallest suspicion of his intentions, he besought them to be cheerful with him that evening, for it was the last time, he said, they would ever see him in his present situation, as he had actually determined to begin the monastic life. In the morning he wrote farewel letters to them; and sent his parents the ring and gown which belonged to him as master of arts; and at the same time he unfolded to them in writing the grounds of his resolution. They grieved excessively that so great talents should be buried in a state of almost nonexistence. But for the space of a month nobody was admitted to speak to him.*

INDULGENCES.

It may not be improper to mention the following anecdote concerning Tetzel, the audacious vender of the papal indulgences.

When the emperor Maximilian was at Inspruck, he was so offended at the wickedness and impudence of Tetzel, who had been convicted of adultery, that he condemned him to death, and had intended to have him seized and put into a bag, and flung into

* Seck. Luth. Ep. Melch. Adam.

the river Œnoponte; but he was prevented by the solicitations of Frederic the elector of Saxony; who, fortunately for Tetzel, happened to be there at the time.*

Burnet informs us that the scandalous sale of pardons and indulgences had by no means so completely ceased in popish countries as is commonly taken for granted. He says, that in Spain and Portugal there is every where a commissary who manages the sale with the most infamous circumstances imaginable. In Spain, the king, by an agreement with the pope, has the profits. In Portugal, the king and the pope go shares.

"In the year 1709 the privateers of Bristol took a galleon in which they found five hundred bales of bulls" for indulgences . . . . "and sixteen reams were in a bale. So that they reckon the whole came to 3,840,000. These bulls are imposed on the people, and sold, the lowest at three rials, a little more than twenty pence, but to some at about eleven pounds of our money. All are obliged to buy them in lent." The author adds, "besides the account given of this in the cruising voyage, I have a particular attestation of it by captain Dampier."†

Protestants in our times are not sufficiently aware of the evils from which, under the blessing of God, a great part of Europe has been delivered, by the rational, animated, and persevering exertions of Luther, his associates, and other early reformers.

GEO. SPALATINUS Page 280.

Appears to have been one of the most intimate friends of Luther. He was of all others the person, to whom the reformer, in his greatest difficulties and dangers, intrusted his most secret feelings and designs. Spalatinus by his good sense, his opportunity

* Adam. Melch. † Vol. iii. introd. p. xx.

of easy access to the elector of Saxony, and his sincere attachment to Luther, was, on many occasions, useful to the cause of the reformation in general, as well as to his friend in particular.

A private epistolary correspondence between the two seems to have been frequent and uninterrupted during many years; and as the historian frequently refers to certain parts of it, which are extremely interesting, the following short account of Georgius Spalatinus himself may have its use.

He was a Franconian of considerable learning and great discretion. He was about a year older than Luther, but appears not to have begun the study of divinity, with any degree of earnestness, till he was more than thirty years of age. He requested his friend to give him his advice concerning the best method of acquiring sacred knowledge. The answer of Luther on this occasion well deserves to be remembered and practised by every student in divinity. After recommending to his notice certain parts of the writings of Jerom, Ambrose, and Augustin, he exhorts him, always to begin his studies with "SERIOUS PRAYER;" for, says he, "there is really NO INTERPRETER OF THE DIVINE WORD, BUT ITS OWN AUTHOR." He adds, "READ THE BIBLE IN ORDER FROM THE BEGINNING TO THE END."

Luther, in his letters to Spalatinus, addresses him, sometimes as librarian, and sometimes as registrary of the elector of Saxony, but he takes care, at the same time, to call him minister of Jesus Christ. In fact, Spalatinus was both secretary and privy counsellor to the elector; he accompanied him to several German diets; and at his court, he preached and performed the duties of domestic chaplain.* A stronger proof of the high estimation in which he was supposed to be held by Frederic the wise needs not to be adduced, than that in the year 1519, the pope himself, Leo X. condescended to write a letter to his BELOVED SON GEORGE SPALATINUS, in which, after acknowledg-

* Page 343.

ing, in the most flattering terms, the great influence and weight which Spalatinus had with the elector, and how very much that prince valued the prudent and wholesome advice of his secretary, he exhorts him "in the Lord, and with his paternal authority requires him, to contribute every thing in his power to repress the detestable temerity of brother Martin Luther, that child of Satan, whose grievous heresy was spreading among the credulous people."

In the affairs of religion Spalatinus used all his influence to strengthen the party of Luther; but he was often so vexed and even dispirited on account of the little attention that was paid to his own ministerial exertions, that he seriously thought of quitting his situation at the elector's court. Luther opposed this intention in the most animated and decisive terms. Take care, said he, that you get the better of these thoughts which harass your mind, or, at least, learn to dismiss them. You must not desert the ministry of the word of God. Christ has called you to his service. Yield yourself to his good pleasure. At present you do not understand the importance of your situation; you will understand it better by and by. The desire you have to quit your post is a mere temptation; the reason of which, we, who are spectators, see better than you do yourself. In a case of this sort, you should rather trust the judgment of your friends than your own. We are the means, which, on this occasion, the Lord uses for your comfort and advice. We call God to witness, that in wishing you to continue in your vocation, we have no other object but his WILL and his GLORY. I consider it as a certain sign of your ministry being acceptable to God, that you are thus tempted. If it were otherwise, you would not be weary and deplore your unfruitfulness; you would rather bustle, and seek to please men, as those do who talk much, though they were never sent with a commission to preach the gospel. . . . .

On the same subject Luther writes thus:

You ask my advice, my dear Spalatinus, whether

you should quit your situation at the elector's court. This is my opinion. I own there is reason in what you allege. "The WORD of God is disregarded." And it is a wise rule, "not to pour out speeches where there is no attention." But I say, if there be ANY persons that love to hear, you should not cease to speak. I myself acted on the principle which I now recommend to you; otherwise I might long ago have been silent amidst this prodigious contempt of the word of God. Therefore I affirm, that unless you have some better reason, which lies heavy on your conscience, this perverse and unreasonable inattention of wicked men is not a sufficient cause for your leaving the court. Consider, of how much service you may be to many, from the weight of your influence with the prince, and from your long experience of the ways of courtiers. Whatever may be the abilities of your successor, Frederic the wise will not trust him much, till time has furnished proofs of his integrity. On the whole, I cannot so much as conceive any reason that will justify the step you speak of, but one, namely, marriage. Stay, therefore, where you are; or if you do depart, let a wife be the cause.

Spalatinus continued in his employments until his death, which happened in his grand climacteric, sixty three, in the year of our Lord 1545. Great grief and depression of spirits are said to have hastened his end. There is extant a most judicious consolatory letter, which Luther wrote to him in the preceding year, and which gave him much comfort. Spalatinus, it seems, through ignorance or inadvertency, had consented to the illegal marriage of a clergyman of bad character; and the matter hung heavy on his mind. 1. Luther wisely cautions his friend against giving way to too much sorrow. He was well acquainted, he said, with the dreadful effects of it. He had felt those effects in his own case; and he had seen them in the cases of others. He instanced Melancthon, who fell into a most dangerous disease, owing to great grief. 2. He then takes up the case, at the worst, namely, on the suppo-

sition that Spalatinus had been really much to blame in the affair; and shows that still he ought not to despair of the grace of God, who was ready to pardon not only the slight faults, but the most grievous sins of the penitent. He tells him, that formerly he himself had been in a similar affliction of mind, which had brought him to the very edge of the grave; but that Staupitius had been of great use to him, by saying, "You are endeavouring to quiet your conscience by considering yourself as a slight, outward, superficial sinner; but you ought to know that Jesus Christ is ready to save the greatest and the vilest of sinners." 3. Lastly, Luther, as a kind brother, exhorts him in the sweetest and most emphatical language to derive his comfort from a view of the gracious Redeemer.

Thus we find Luther always the same man. Exercised in the school of adversity he feels for others. Naturally tender and grateful, he loves his friends and administers every comfort in his power. His eye is always fixed on the next world: and the proper business of THIS life, with him, is the care of the soul. The account just given is an admirable specimen of his talents as a spiritual adviser.

How many, in a like case, through a mistaken affection, or through fear of giving offence to an aged, dying friend, would have contented themselves with saying nothing but "smooth things"* concerning human infirmity, general sincerity, and the venial nature of sins of inadvertence? &c.

But Martin Luther, though behind no man in compassion and benevolence, kept two things constantly in mind, the glory of the Redeemer, and the salvation of men's souls. Hence on these subjects particularly, he always spoke without disguise.

* Is. xxx. 10.

ERASMUS.

It is a most unpleasant circumstance belonging to the history of this great man, that the longer he lives, the lower he sinks in the estimation of the christian reader. It is in the beginning of the reformation, while he was exposing the scandalous practices of the indolent, debauched, avaricious clergy, that he appears to the greatest advantage. But when Luther and his associates began to preach boldly the gospel of Christ in its purity, Erasmus instantly shrunk; and not only ceased to be a coadjutor of the reformers, but became gradually their peevish and disgusted adversary. With inconceivable address and management, he steadily trode, as long as he could, his favourite middle path of pleasing both sides; but when the contention grew sharp, when the doctrines of grace were found to offend the great and the powerful, and when persecution was at the door, the cautious evasive system was no longer practicable; Erasmus was called upon to decide; and there could be little doubt to which party a character of this stamp would incline.

When we divest ourselves of prejudice, and view Erasmus as the most elegant scholar of his age, admired and courted by princes, popes, and dignified ecclesiastics, we are compelled to admit, that his temptation to support the established hierarchy was very great; and it is to be lamented that he had not a clearer and a more affecting insight into the deceitfulness of the human heart. If he had understood more of mens' natural alienation from God by the FALL, and had had a deeper practical sense of the evil of sin in his own case, he would have felt weary and heavyladen; he would have sought more diligently for deliverance from internal guilt and misery; he would have been more disposed to resist temptations of every sort, and particularly those sins that easily beset him; and lastly, though he might still have differed from Luther in subordinate matters or modes of expression, he would have had the same general views

of the nature of the redemption by Christ Jesus; and instead of raising captious objections against the doctrines of grace, and quarrelling with the man, whom providence had ordained to be the instrument of their revival, he would have applied those blessed, healing truths to the distresses of his own conscience, and would have rejoiced in that "burning and shining light" which arose amidst the thick darkness of papal ignorance and superstition.

In one word; the different sentiments, which these great men entertained, of the leading doctrines of the gospel, was the real cause of their unhappy contention; every circumstance of which may be traced to this single source. And no wonder; for it seems almost impossible that a warm and cordial attachment should long subsist between persons, who zealously support contrary notions of the way of eternal salvation. It is true, that where the natural tempers are mild and ingenuous, many causes of irritation will be avoided or suppressed; and it is true also, that where divine grace is powerful, the affections of meekness, kindness, and forbearance will abound and be in vigorous exercise. But after all that can be said or imagined, there will still be such an essential difference of the spiritual taste, such an opposition of the judgment, and such a dissimilitude in the whole turn of thinking, that separation, not coalescence, dissension, not agreement, is to be looked for under such circumstances.

One cannot reflect on these things without much concern. The cause of disunion, here pointed at, is of very extensive operation in practice, and might be exemplified in many lamentable instances, as well as in the unfriendly strife between Luther and Erasmus.

This first part of the fourth volume, together with the subjoined appendix, contains ample materials to enable the reader to form a judgment both of the soundness of Luther's christianity, and also of the earnestness with which he taught his doctrines. Everything that is to follow concerning him is altogether

of a similar description with what has gone before. With intense study and with fervent prayer, he searches for light, and he attains it: faithful to his convictions, he speaks without disguise; he exerts every nerve in support of christian truth and christian liberty; and as he is engaged in a contest which he considers as the cause of God, he is ever ready to hazard all that in this life is dear to man.

From the foregoing observations concerning Erasmus, and also from what is advanced in the preface, the student of the history of the church of Christ will be led to expect FURTHER documents relative both to his religious sentiments, and to the part which he acted during the progress of the reformation. The facts which are at present before the reader, it must be owned, do not convict that cautious and artful disputant, of any decided opposition to a change in the ecclesiastical system, or of any settled alienation of mind from the reformer. On the contrary, they must rather be considered, in the main, as favourable both to Luther and to his doctrines. Yet, enough has appeared already to raise considerable suspicions respecting the stanch orthodoxy of his faith, and the honest simplicity and disinterestedness of his intentions.

In the remainder of this volume and its appendix, we shall endeavour to throw light on these matters. At present we conclude with the substance of a passage extracted from one of his little controversial tracts. The quotation, though but short, is of itself sufficiently characteristic to furnish satisfactory evidence, that Erasmus differed very materially from Luther in his ideas of the importance of certain scriptural doctrines, and also of the existing contest with the romish hierarchy.

"If," says he, "I were called upon to suffer for the truth of the gospel, I should not refuse to die; but as yet I have no disposition to suffer death for Luther's paradoxes. The present disputes are not concerning articles of faith; but, whether the pope's supremacy is of Christ's appointment; whether the or-

der of cardinals is a necessary part of the church; whether there is Christ's authority for the practice of confession; whether freewill contributes to salvation; whether faith alone puts a man into a state of salvation;*..... whether the mass can in any sense be called a sacrifice. On account of these points, which are the usual subjects of the scholastic contentions, I would neither endanger my own life, nor venture to take away the life of another.....During our endless quarrels, whether any HUMAN WORKS should be denominated GOOD, the consequence is, we produce no good works. While we are contending whether faith alone without works puts a man into a state of salvation,† we neither reap the fruits of faith, nor the reward of good works. Besides, there are some things of such a nature, that, though they were ever so true, they ought not to be mentioned in the hearing of the populace; for example, that freewill is nothing but an unmeaning term; that ANY person may do the office of a priest, and has the power of remitting sins, and of consecrating the body of our Lord; that justification is by FAITH ALONE;‡ and that our works are of no use for that end. What can be the effect of throwing out such paradoxical doctrines as these before the vulgar, but schism and sedition?"§

This language is so perfectly intelligible, that it cannot be necessary to add any remarks by way of elucidation.

* Conferat salutem. † Conferat salutem.
‡ Sola fide conferri justitiam, opera nostra nihil ad rem facere.
§ Erasm. Purg. ad exp. Hutten